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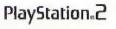


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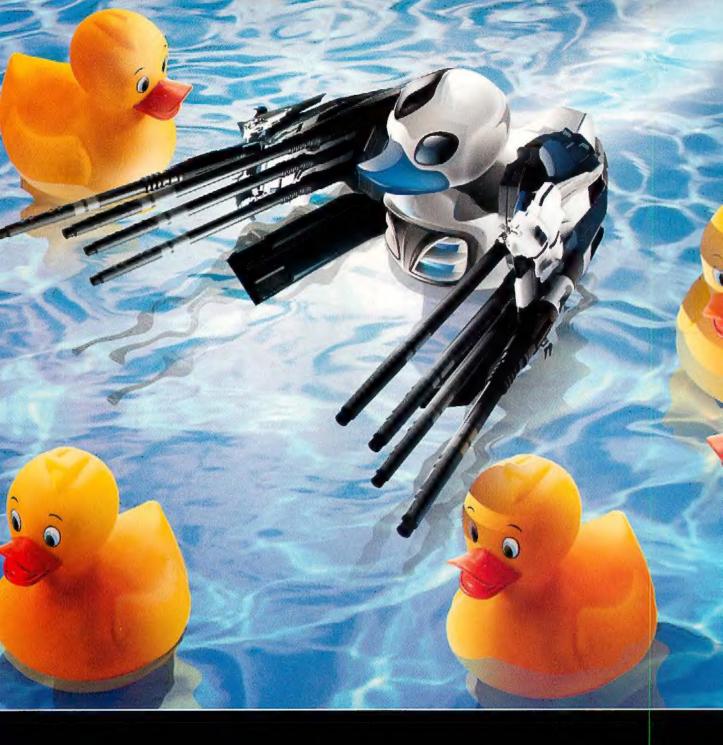












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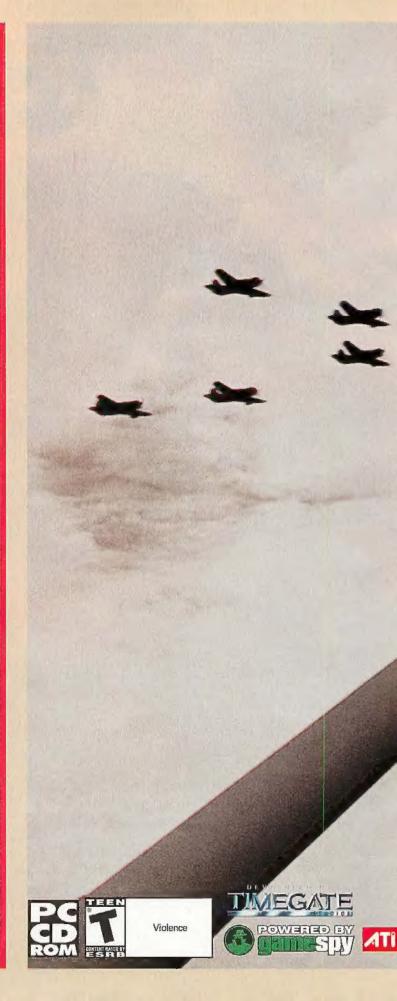
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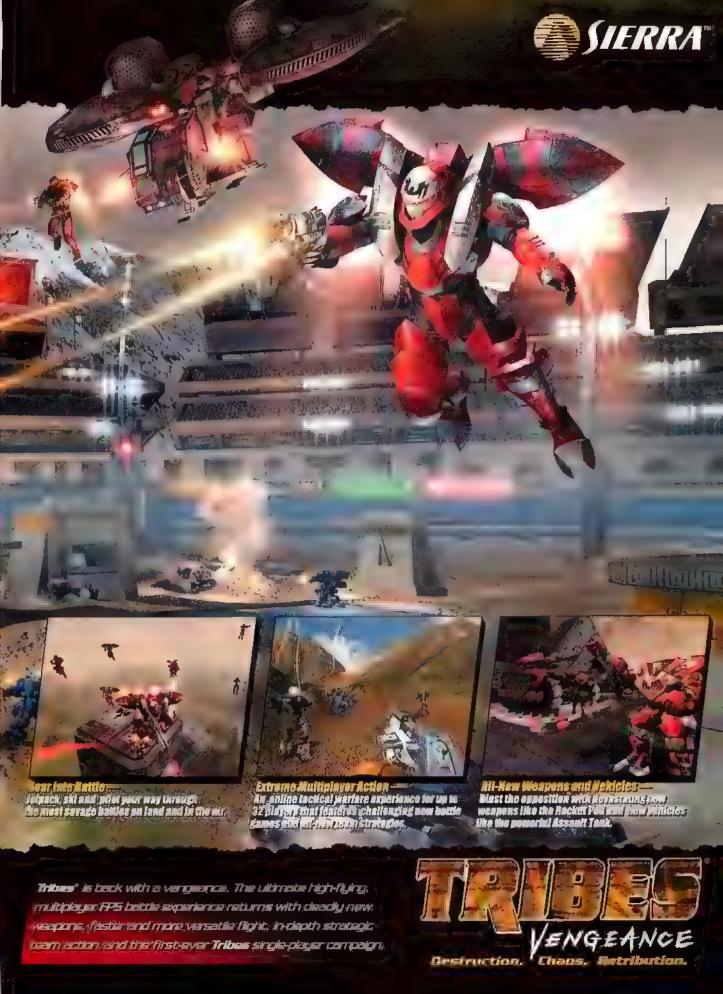








VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games



### THIS IS TOTAL WAR





















A Park Property

# ROME



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### Contents December 2004 Issue #245

### **18** Editorial

LOL! Hey, wanna be in my group?

### **22** Letters

And lot The rabble did scribbleth and so the morons scribbleth back! Eth.

### **32** Radar

This month, we talk with Tim Schafer, the Id Software gang, and even Mark Jacobs (the man behind Dark Age of Camelot) to find out what's next for PC games. We've also got some exclusive news on the pending Joint Ops expansion, as well as an interview with Saruman himself. Christopher Lee.

### **54** Previews

We're busting down the door with a handson preview of SWAT 4, then we go straight to hell for a look at the Painkiller expansion. After the day is won, kick back and relax with Playboy: The Mansion. We even have some new, exclusive into on the upcoming City of Heroes expansions!

### **90** Reviews

Kohan II is giving sliced bread a run for its money in the greatness department this month. Not so much with the sliced-bread greatness is Evil Genius-It's more like balled-up lumps of Wonder Bread Leavening the rest of our review lineup is Call of Duty: United Offensive, ShellShock: Nam '67, Alpha Black Zero, and more.

### **105** Tech

Share in the grief as our beloved Will O'Neal pens the last Will Power ever. As if that's not reason enough to jump right to Tech. we've packed the section with reviews, as well as a brand-new Cracked Case

### **115** Check Out

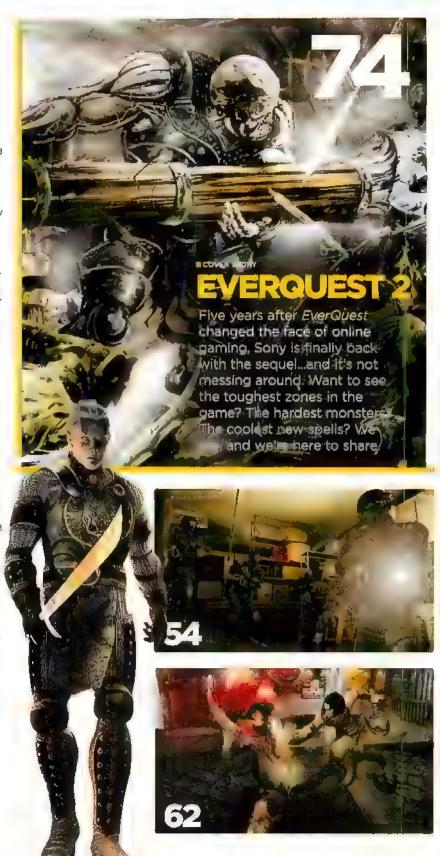
It's the return of Gamer's Edge in this month's Doom 3 extravaganza; three pages of boss strategies, as well as the debut of senior editor Darren Gladstone's new comic. Game Over, Plus all the usual stuff. like Killer Rig A-List, and High Score.

### **126** Tom vs. Bruce

Tom and Bruce are at it again this month. dipping into the RTS well with Kohan II.

### **130** Scorched Earth

And so little Robby Sunshine completely alienates our readers with the bitterest opening (ine ever









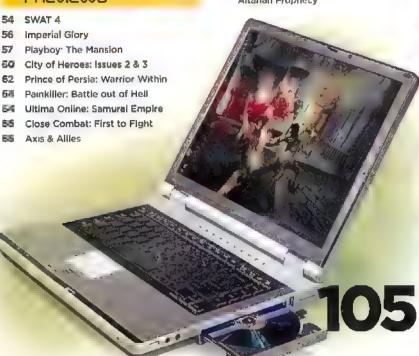


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### CGW.TUP.COM

The holy trinity of Doom 3, The Sims 2, and Half-Life 2 continue to be popular among the IUP.com PC gaming community. You can find informa-



tion on all the latest happenings on our webspace, including wrap-ups of ill (i) most recent events, up-to-theminute news, and extended CGW features-such as full, uncut AIM Game chat sessions from our Radar sections

### KRISTENSS.1UP.COM

Managing editor Kristen Salvatore (of "Mom;" as she's affectionately known around here) has plenty to say about polltics, bables

and anger



management, She's also a big baseball fan, and she likes eating, A lot. We won't even hold the fact that she likes watching Charmed against her-mostly 'cause she can: kick all our asses.

### BOARDS.1UP.COM

This month on the CGW boards; our loyal readers complain about review scores, hardware issues, software issues, and the demodisc. It's sort of like every month? that's come before it...and every month that is yet to come. Don't you just love that wacky internet? Seriously, though, check out our message boards to interact with JCGW fans like Kuredan, grannlegamer, and Wingerll. If you're lucky, you might even catch Robert Coffey mocking someone for being: tan idiot. What are the odds?

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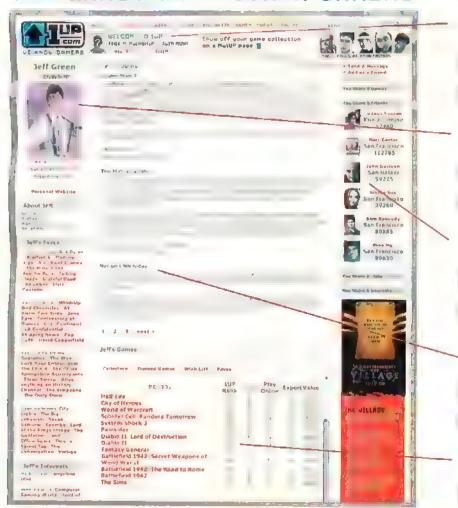




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### Ding Time

### Good-bye family, hello rotonga mages

JEFF GREEN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hi, my name is Jeff Green, and 'm a former EverQuest addict. Yes, like those sad doofuses you see grimly profiled on 48 Hours of Dateline there was a brief period of time a few years ago when I forgot I had an actual real life because I was too busy leveling up my dwarf palaclin in Sony Online's online fantasy. world. Though I thought I was immune to such behavior, the game sucked me in to an extent that's made me wary of MMOs ever since Fortunately, a whole generation of MMOs that

basically stunk came out, so it was easy to stay away. But with City of Heroes, World of WarCraft, and now EverQuest II. ( feel myself drawn like a moth to a flame again. The EverQuest II beta I've been playing has proven that sony has been listening to its critics and has been studying the good work being done by its competitors, it also has an amazingly killer graphics engine. Doofaeus, my rotunga mage, is level 6 at this point, and I have only just begun to ding. To all of my friends and family, I apologize in advance

And in other (sad) news, this issue marks the departure of both Will O' Neal and Johnny Liu. Johnny, we just barely got to know you. Wil, we knew you altoo well, and this place is 10 times guieter without you. And I'm not saying that like It's a good thing. Good ruck, guys



KRISTEH SALVATORE Kristen Salvatore just got back from Austin, Texas. where she attended the empowering Women in Gaming conference. Meanwhite, back at the office, the guys celebrated her absence with a Parky's ma al ron,



ROBERT COFFEY Robert Colfey will not rest until Jeli Green admits that lie iost Robert's Concrete Blande CD. What Robert doesn't rearize is that selling a CD on eRay is not the same thing as "losing" it. See you on People's Court fella!



DARREN GLADSTONE When not tearing his hair out compling the Radar section, Darrer is busy collecting every cool piece of technology ever nvented. This month, for Instance, he's been flying around the office in his hovercraft, filipping us off from 10 feet in the air. We love Darren.



**BYAN SCOTT** CGIY's resident boy genius (or is it cir. Friday?), Ryan puts logether the splendilerous Check Out section, compiles the CD, and eats every goldang Rice Krispies freat in Bre candy machine every month



ROB SCRULTZ Rob Schultz is the big brain who lakes our lousy art ideas. throws them out, and makes good ones instead. Why he puts up with this rather than starting his own company and making a million dollars is (GW's Inggest mystery



MICHAEL JENN NGS ASSOC AYE ARE DIRECTOR While everyone else on stall squawks and bleats at day like sick farın anlır als, Zen master MI keeps a cool, stote, calm front. If Steve McQueen knew Quark (and were still alive), he'd be Michael Jennings.

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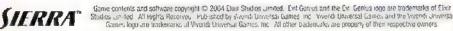




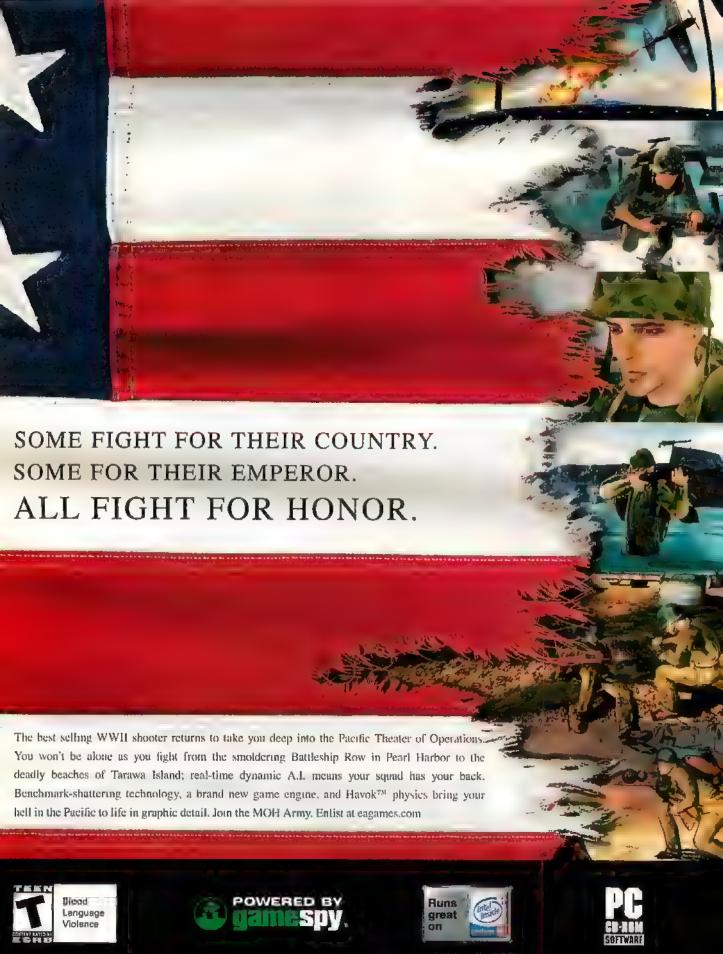


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### MEDAL OF HONOR PACIFIC ASSAULT

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## Letters Because we all need a little senseless gibberish



### MANCHURIAN GAME REVIEWER

After having read your Doom 3 review and seeing the five-star rating. I can't help

but wonder if there was some bias involved in your final score.

If you read various Internet forums at all, you'll notice the majority of people are saying that Doom 3 is simply a good, arbeit run-of-the-mill first-person shooter with decent graphics and sound or that it outright "sucks," I'm in the camp that feels that Doom 3 is a good game but is nothing special or revolutionary, unless you are talking about the graphics. I accept the outside possibility that your magazine might have been totally wowed by Doom 3, but I consider that highly unlikely given the high number of gamers who feel differently

I can't help but wonder if a few things were at work with your review. The most obvious thing is that your magazine staff. had the opportunity to be some of the very first to play Doom 3. There has to be a certain novelty factor or "high" that comes with that knowledge, t'il wager that Id and Activision furnished your experience with some of the very best gear available for the PC today. I'll also bet that the room was set up in such a way that the experience in terms of sight and sound were second to none and that such an experience goes well beyond what most gamers will experience in their "real world" setup.

Now we come to what you may consider my most sinister assertions. How do we, the public at large, know that you weren't threatened in some way by td Software or Activision to give a high review score to Doom 3 or forever be barred from any future early review opportunities? How do we know that giving a high review score wasn't a condition to being able to come see the game before its public release? If those two questions don't ring as true, then how do we know if you didn't strike up some sort of business deal in exchange for a boosted review score?

I also can't help but wonder if the fivestar rating was more about pride than anything else. After all, Doom 3 has been hotly anticipated for a very long time, and

do not speak Canadian (whatever that is). However, in the Sept. '04 issue, Erik Wolpaw reviewed Joint Operations and said that 50 square kilometers is 31 square miles. That is simply not true in Canada (which I'm NOT from) or anywhere else in the world. There are 1.609344 kilometers in a mile, so 50 kilometers does convert to 31 miles. However, there are 2.589988 square kilometers in a square mile. Thus, there are only 19.3 square mites in 50 square kilometers. It's not that big of a deal, but I felt compelled to point it out, Everything would just be easier if we could avoid those slily conversions and the U.S. switched over to the metric system. I'm not saying that because I'm from Canada (which I'm really not), I'm just saying that because it would be easier. Really.

am not from Canada and definitely

Anal Roy



You don't actually expect us to remotely take you seriously, do you, Anal Boy? C'mon, Anal Boy. We want to listen to you, Anal Boy, but, Anal Boy, we can't. Sorry, Anal Boy. in one ear and out the other, Anal Boy. You will forever be the butt of our jokes, Anal Boy.

it would be difficult to admit from a business or even a PC-gaming-magazine standpoint that Doom 3 was anything less than stellar. What magazine devoted to gaming on the PC dares admit that Doom 3 wasn't a gameplay revolution? It would be like admitting defeat.

Of course, the decline of gaming on the PC is a concern to me and everyone else, but in light of the fact that a lot of people disagree with your reviews, you may have done more harm than good to our little hobby. If people fueled by your reviews go out and buy Doom 3 and it falls to meet their expectations, it not only makes you look bad, but also adds to the discouragement factor. And to me, that sort of selling out to developers and publishers is one of the most shameful things of all. Mark Hopkins

Mark, we're too stupid to be that nefarious. But let us say, we did play Doom 3 on a great machine (and even then, we noted some technical issues), and it's running great on our less-thanstellar personal machines; we weren't threatened by Id (have you seen these guys? Our intern could take the lot of them); we have never bargained and never will bargain coverage in exchange for ratings; we are precisely the magazine that would dare to admit Doom 3 wasn't a revolution (did you see our Star Wars Galaxies review?); and we truly did love the game. And remember, online forums are dominated by people who'll fight to the death over The Silmarillion-those cranks are hardly representative of humankind, let alone all gamers.

### TASTES LIKE CHICKEN

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Mall

I'd like to say hi to my mom and note that my dad put Robert Coffey's "Pantsfree leprechaun jig of victory" into effect. it would be nice to blend an FPS game with a scenario tree like the one that was developed for Panzer General.

-Fred Gilligan

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Are you like us? Are you wondering why a purported steakhouse is selling off the corpses of zebras and fallow deer? Are you thinking that maybe there's a perfectly reasonable and terrifying reason they went out of business? And what the hell is a blesbok?

### THE FORCE IS STRONG IN THIS ONE

In your 10 Years Ago in CGW piece from the October 2002 issue, you say that if LucasArts released TIE Fighter with "a quick graphical update and make it run on Windows XP, we'll forgive you for canceling Sam & Max [2]."

Maybe I'm missing something here (I'm not as up on those things as I used to be), but didn't LucasArts release both X-Wing and TIE Fighter with updated graphics using the X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter engine? While that's still a bit dated, it offers far superior graphics to those in the original, which were little more than unadorned polygons. The cockpit images were the same as the ones in the original (that is, very dated), but the X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter engine's graphics make the games passable by modern graphic standards. As for Windows XP compatibility, the XVT engine used DirectX 5 (I believe), so the games should run fine in XP. Or is there an incompatibility I've overlooked?

Anyhow, I've been subscribing to your magazine since the original TIE Fighter came out (or so). Keep up the good work. Zvi Rosen

We looked into it, Zvi, and we were able to find versions of TIE Fighter and X-Wing vs. Tie Flohter that would run on Windows ME. In theory, If they run on ME, they should run on XP, but considering how crapplly everything except Barble's Dream Pony ran on ME, we're a little doubtful, But at \$1,99 on Amazon.com. they might be worth the gamble.

### WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

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Heh heh heh...you said "ballshooter."

### **BRAIN-DEAD LETTER OFFICE**

For the life of me, I can't find a way to send an e-mail directly to the CGW editors, so I hope that this is the right place to send this to.

Jet Black

You don't have an address for people to send letters to listed anywhere that I could find. Getting tired of our whining?

Taylor McLean

Here at the CGW bile hive, we are forever bemoaning the dearth of letters we receive. Perhaps we should bemoan our own dumbassity-we've been consistently



failing to publish our e-mail address. So here it is: cgwietters@ziffdavis.com. Now start writing to us!

### THE CHARACTER OF OUR CONTENT

OK, first off, I love this magazine, I really do. When it comes in the mail, it is the highlight of the month. Now that we have the sucking up out of the way, let's get to the point. No. 1, you used to feature "Penny Arcade" in your magazine, now you don't I just want to know why. "Penny Arcade" is friggin' awesome! Second, how come Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic Isn't In the Hall of Fame? I mean, it's your Hall of Fame, and you seem to love it as much as I do. KOTOR is in my estimation right up there with TIE Fighter as best Star Wars game ever made Period. So please just give some snappy answers to my stupid questions.

uberCTfan

You can still read "Penny Arcade" online, bag boy. We like the strip, too, but it was getting too R-rated for a magazine like CGW, which caters to housebound nerds. As for KOTOR, we agree it's a great gamebut games become eligible for the Hall of Fame only two years after their release. We like the passage of time to cool our fanboy Jets and to gain some perspective.

The visual of the dancing, pants-free leprechaun kept me awake for hours. Thks.

~Eric

Nancy Kirk is on a mission to save the world's guilts, one quilt at a time.

-Nancy Kirk



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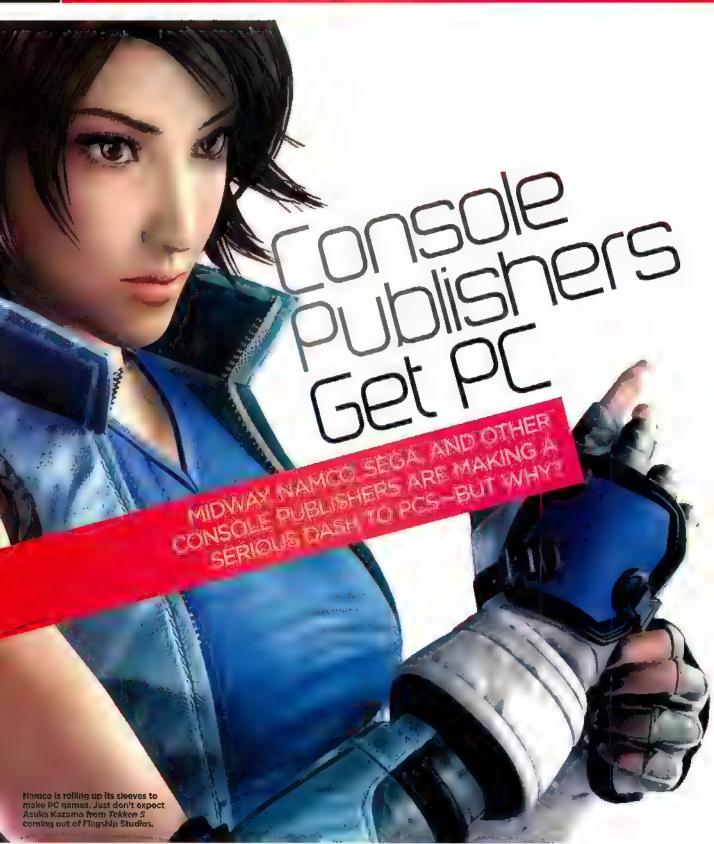
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## Radar Where "PC" means more than just "politically correct"





C. Payer Bull. Pine Schools Halles to his gaming ration Positioning ofth Octobiomanis



Wo came, we NOW. We from the at this year's **CittakeCon** 



Christopher Lac New class We actually Buisto talk to Entistephel Peenbout lik involvement in





he arrival of the next-generation consoles was supposed to bring about the death of the PC, causing everyone to become fulltime console developers. That

didn't happen, in fact, PC business is booming, and some companies are making more money than ever,

"I believe that on the side of publishers, there was some belief or concern that maybe the PC might be dying out," says Bill Roper, chief executive officer at Flagship Studios. "I think that what they're finding out is that that's really not happening."

What has happened, however, is a movement of console publishers-many who have never touched the platform before-into the PC's realm. Weren't these the same publishers looking the other way just years before?

Most industry watchers aren't surprised. "The two biggest-selling games of all time are both PC games," says Mark Rein, Epic Games' vice president, "If you ignore that, you're just stupid."

### CONSOLES COME, CONSOLES GO

It's no coincidence that this comes as the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube are nearing their ends. Publishers are looking for additional revenue sources before the next generation.

2005 and 2006 are transition years for the console side of the business, and those transitions are bloody," says Steve Allison, chief marketing officer at Midway Games. "While we have plenty of capital in the bank to survive this time, we'd rather use some of that capital to invest in the PC side."

Namco signed Fragship Studios, Midway stole Epic Games from Atari, Sega has its hands in The Matrix Online. But actions will speak louder to gamers than any number of fancy publishing deals.

After all, conso e publishers have traditionally limited their PC support to pushing out half-assed ports of console releases.

### HALF-ASSED NO MORE

Midway is one publisher that wants to change this image. "We are going to take a lot of care with the console-focused games that we bring to PC" says Allison. "We are very serious about being in this space.... Epic is the first of a few big developers we will be working with on PC

Midway was pretty serious. If they're talking to us, they've got to be pretty serious about PC gaming," says Rein.

Sega America is another example that wants to recommit to the PC gaming market. One reason, according to VP of entertainment marketing Scott A. Steinberg: "PC gaming doesn't go through the same [fiveyear] cycle as consoles." It also helps that with SegaSoft, they ve already been in this space before, "The Matrix Online was an excellent opportunity for us to build on our position as a leader and pioneer in the online space," says Steinberg. Does this mean we'll be seeing more PC titles from Sega? "Absolutely!"

Roper believes Namco is headed in the same direction. "We were very convinced that this was definitely a strategic direction for Namco," he says. "It really feels like a concentrated effort."

Having found success on consoles, however, many publishers may be coming into the

PC world without much of an idea of how the audiences and markets differ

Grantley Day, director of PC development at Namco, tells us his company is "an industry innovator of quality games, with success on every platform we've pursued," as is evidenced with Soul Callbur and Tekken. However, many of these games are from genres (lighting, shooting) that typically don't find success with PC audiences.

"In some ways, we're educating each other on some things, which is good," says Roper "The differences between a console and a PC are more on the creative side than in the publishing aspects"

The more companies pouring resources into high-quality games, the better, but the hurried nature of these publishers entering the market leaves an uneasy feeling that many will jump ship when the new consoles are finally established.

"I think some will, but not the smart publishers," says Rein, "The smartest will recognize they can make a lot of money on PC.

"Any major publisher we're talking with is interested in how to create a relationship, something that's going to be here five, 10, 15 years from now," says Roper

Whether console publishers are here to stay remains to be seen, but more PC games can't be a bad thing, "It's like [the console publishers] created new opportunities for some publishers while allowing some other publishers to rekindle an old flame," says Roper M Patrick Klepek

"The two biggest-selling games of all time are both PC games. If you ignore that, you're just stupid."

-Mark Rein, VP of Epic Games



34 COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

HE GOT GAME

### Psycho Surgery

Tim Schafer wants to get inside your head with Psychonauts. We got into his...

im Schafer's Psychonauts was going to be an Xbox-only game. Well, it was until Microsoft dropped it (and Schafer's Double Fine Studios) from its first-party lineup this past spring. Thank God, because Majesco has picked up Microsoft's slack and is now offering up this inventive game on the PC as well.

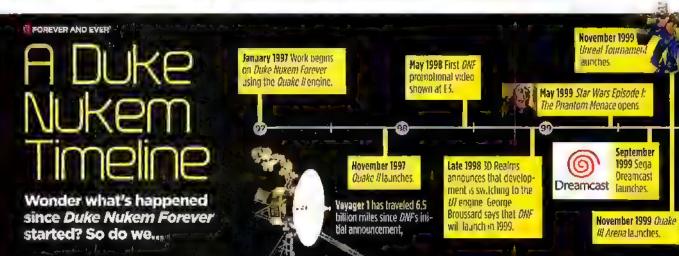
The obvious question is why this game was even dropped in the first place. While both parties are vague about the matter, it seems no coincidence that Ed Fries, Xbox's vice president of games publishing and Psychonauts' chief evangel st within Microsoft, was let go just before the ax fell. Psychonauts, it seems, was simply too much of a left-field idea for the Redmond giant-and so, after being funded by the deep pockets of Microsoft for nearly four years. Majesco will now publish the game on PlayStation 2 and PC as well, "We aiways wanted as many people as possible in the entire world to see the game," says Schafer, "The biggest hurdle will be getting the feel right on PC, particularly with mouse-and-keyboard controls ,but we think we can do it?

Psychonauts is an evolution of Schafer's celebrated graphic-adventure style (Grim Fandango, Full Throttle) fused with the hands-on playability and rich gamep ay opportunities provided by console platform games (Super Mano Sunshine, Ratchet & Clank). It is, quite literally, a journey into the psyches of the insane Each mind becomes an actual physical level, full of various twists, turns, fart jokes, and psychological demons. For instance, there's Mill a's Dance Party—a

level set inside the mind of Brazilian levitation expert Milla Vodello—which takes players for a ride through her Internal discoparty (which, of course, is complicated by various emotional hang-ups). The whole adventure is wrapped in some of the most inspired graphics we've seen in years, achieving a doodley, almost hand-drawn look while maintaining the depth of 3D.

Of course, "feel" is something the Double Fine team has wrestled with from the very beginning. "The first thing you always try to tackle is the thing you're most scared about," explains Schafer "So while I'd done lots of adventure-game gameplay before, I've never had to do stuff that felt goodgrabbing a ledge, how many microseconds until you can pull up on the ledge, and how high should he jump, and should you be able to double-jump, that kind of thing. It's that whole game-as-toy thing-it should be fun just to run around and grab things. And I think we've done that." As for the dearth of creativity in the industry, Schafer remains hopeful. 'That could fix itself, Just in the same way that independent films exploded—that was a reaction to something, it wasn't like everything was great in the world of Hollywood movies and that's why independent films came along Independent films came along because people wanted an alternative to the things they were seeing,"

At this point, Psychonauts is looking spectacular, while the humor and aesthetic are already proven quantities, time will tell if the gameplay mechanics can be preserved in their transition to PC. Judgment day arrives next spring. Sevan Shamoon







eagerly awaited World of WarCraft isn't the only upcoming foray into Bilzzard's medleval fantasy world—the franchise will soon be the subject of a three-chapter praphic novel series entitled WarCraft: The Sunwell Trilogy. The project is a collaboration between Blizzard and TOKYOPOP, who many comic fans will recognize as the publisher of several popular. Japanese manga seriesa

### FOUR-COLOR WARCRAFT

The tritogy is set between the events of WarCraft III and World or WarCraft. It chronicles the advencures of a blue dragon named Kalec who has been sent to investigate the possible reappearance of the idestroyed Sunwell, a source of preat power for the eiven kingdom Kalec soon finds himself beset by

trouble on all sides—contested by the avil Undead Scourge for the Sunwell's power and pursued by crafty dwarven bounty hunter Along the way, he meets up with a mysterious peasant girl named Anveens, who ends up being a vital place of the puzzle. The Sunwell Trilogy will plant story seeds for future WarCraft games, and we might even see a few comed appearances-including a certain allen prince from WarCraft III

The story is being penned by esteemed fantasy author Richard A Knaak, whose previous works include a number of novels and short stories in the wildy popular Dregoniance eries, as well as soveral current and upcoming WarCraft novels. Kneak is no stranger to comics, either: Hill most beloved Dragonlance novel The Legend of Huma, has recently been adapted into a comic

miniseries by Devil's Due Publishing Art duties for The Sunwell Trilogy are being handled by Jae Hwari Kim, who is considered to be one or Korea's top comic artists, kim has a solld background in martial arts

mange; he is best known for his work on TOKYOPOP's King of Heill which is one of Korga's best-selling manga series

The Sunwell Trilogy will be pubished simultaneously in both the United States and Korea. The first volume, titled Dragon Hunt, is scheduled to hit stores next March with the second to follow later in the year. Blizzard has also hinted at the possibility of graphic novels based on StarCraft or Diablo, depending on how well this initial series sells. If meying even half as popular as the games themselves, it shouldn't be long before we're knee-deep in Blizzard comics. 52 Ryan Scott

Blizzard'i **Upoc** strategy franchise gets its own comic

November 2000 [ George W. Bush e ected presider t

November 2001 Microsoft xbox launches



February 2003 unreal it the Awakening **Faunches** 



March 2004 Unrea-Tournament 2004 launches.

August 2004 Doom 31aunches

October 2000 PlayStation 2 launches.

October 2001 United States invades Afghan stan, Broussard posts, "Sorry guys, it won't be a 2001 Kabul\_ release" on 3D

Rea ms' boards, '> AFGHANISTAN Kandahar,

Wars Episode ll: Attack of the Clones opens.

March 2003 United May 2002 Star States invades Iraq looking for WMDs.



Novers South and Opportunity were proposed, authorized, announced, designed, launched, and successfully landed on Mars in less time.

2004 Broussard states that development has been on track since 2002 and that the game will be out soon. Corporate heads at Take-Two hope for late 2005.

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A CETTER PROCESSION

## Tapping the Id

#### The guys from Id Software talk about life after Doom 3

oom 3 is out, official news about Quake 4 is finally available, and word has it the boys at Id Software aren't sleeping much these days. With a few minutes for them to breathe between projects, we caught up to lead designer Tim Willits and CEO Todd Hollenshead during this year's QuakeCon. S Damen Gladstone

About what's up next for id Software: Tim Willits: A short vacation, digging through my ever-growing stack of unplayed games, and then getting right back to work. The next projects are already happening, John [Carmack] announced that we have a Doom 3 mission pack on the way, but that's all I can say for now on that. And we've already started initial work on the next brandnew game.

The artists have started working on concept art and prototypes for it. And John is also adding enhancements to the engine I'm excited because it's going to be a brand-new intellectual property, a whole

bust down a door and run in with your biggest gun. You'd miss out (on) the creatures jumping out of the shadows, and half the point of playing is gone

About "being ready when it's ready": TW: While John kept us focused, it still took eight months longer than planned It's the curse of trying to perfect a new engine and create a game at the same time. The great thing about the next title is that we're starting off with the Doom tech. And we're not adding a lot to the engine. You know, John's working on a few systems, but it's basically the same. So that' I give us an opportunity to get done with our next project a whole lot quicker

id Software's take on duct tape and mods: TH: Actually, we've been surprised at how fast people have gotten some mods out. But we do include everything that's in the box for a reason. Obviously, a lot of people wanted the flashlight attachment for their shotgun. We've aiready seen a mod that allows for 32-player





#### "The fact that it's a *Doom* game means there are a lot of expectations."

new franchise. We can't talk about if the pacing will be fast like the old games or slowed down like in Doom 3 just yet...but I'm definitely psychodi

On how Doom 3 was received by the public:

TW: The fact that it's a Doom game means there are a lot of expectations. Most people love it, but some make the mistake of trying to compare this game to a UT2004 or Far Cry Truth is, this was Intentionally built as a single-player survival-horror game. Kind of like Resident Full but with more action and better camera control. And yes, it's slow and heavily scripted, but it's all for a reason. Todd Hollenshead: We wanted to slow the pace down and take a more tactical approach. I think it's good that the game humbles you when you play it like Rambo. because it's not as scary when you just

multiplayer matches, and there are plenty of others in the works.

#### Will there ever be a Doom movie:

TH: I really do think that in the next 16 months, there will be a very good Doom movie up on the big screen. The preproduction is going on now in Prague Andrzei Bartkowiak (Cradle 2 the Grave) is directing, and Karl Urban (Lord of the Rings) just signed on to play the lead. We already have an excellent script (which doesn't mirror the game's story), and Universal has already spent literally millions of dollars on getting the movie to where it is now. And so now it's just a matter of following through, I'm very much looking forward to it. There have already been rumors of The Rock being involved He could be, but he would play the role of Sqt. Kelly.



>> SOE busts counterfeiting ring--550 trillion illegal credits (Star Wars Galaxies' in-game currency) were seized FEED . In a raid, The 200 credit-launderers banned from playing will have to find new ways to avoid sunlight.



## A Whole Lotta Quakin' Goin' On

#### We go behind the scenes of one of the biggest LAN parties

his summer, 5,570 hardcore PC gamers descended upon Dallas for the sole purpose of fragging. Every year at QuakeCon, the mecca of all things id Software, people come from as far away as Europe to win the tournament's \$25,000 first prize. Others drive across the county just to lug their monster PC rigs into the Bring Your Own Computer area.

#### READY TO RUMBLE

No surprise to anyone. Fatality walked away unscathed and \$25,000 richer from the Doom 3 competition. There was a case mod competition that produced some impressive entries. Vazzini spent seven months and \$2,000 fitting a server into a Dallas Morning News newspaper stand. The Fifth Column cian out of Oklahoma cannibalized the top of a Papa John's delivery car and created its LAN-boy rig

#### **READY TO STUMBLE**

The event isn't just about fraggin' and braggin', though. For many of the participants. QuakeCon is the biggest social event of the year and a chance to hang out with some of the people they've spent most of their free time trying to kill. The members of GB Clan. for example, wore combat helmets in honor of Enemy Territory (their favorite game) and met up with buddies who play online

While the daytime features plenty of mod workshops, multiplayer tournaments, and PC-building contests, the night becomes a Bawls-and-vodka-fueled bacchanalia of sorts. Just imagine as thousands of postpubescent guys and gals cut loose in their hotel rooms. Not surprisingly, there are always a few "incidents" that security must handle, and this year was no different. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one of the hired hands regaled us with tales of ribaldry, from the young man who was kicked out of the posh Gaylord Texan Resort (site of this year's event) for urinating off of a sixth-story bacony to the woman who was supposedly handling her boyfr end's, er. BFG in one of the many hot tubs.

As you can guess, nearly everyone had a great time, ensuring that the 2005 event will be bigger and better. If we're allowed back across state lines WWIII Tuttle with moral support from Darren Gladstone

REWS >> Awardizzle, my bizzle. Spike TV continues pandering to the "urban youth FEED market"—its second annual awards show will be hosted by Snoop Dogg. >>





mthom, rieples and million to the play vide in a play vide in a play become the state logic than thoughter fellow that len Champion Lee has played some of the pest people in chematic history. Baside portraying Dracule in nearly a dozen ilms, Lee was Francisco Scaramangian The Man with the Solder Gue, Saruman The Lord of the Rings trilogy, and Count Books in Ster Wire Episode II to role he'll reprise in west May's Balancia illi December

That it browser and an arrangement year online hired the \$2-year-old British accom-Sany Elizani Di Baril In Profession VIII Herman overlord, he's a syranti has a dictary is na is immortal. Las acclarus Nobber mous where he corner from to its uthless, has no realings attall, and the second interest that we'll second to the seco

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**"Voice acting [for** a videogame] is more difficult than anything else for an actor."

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a way to leave the later to be the contract to The state of the s THE THE STATE OF T affer felten gest for 3 Million

Not every good game comes out on the PC. We know-we find it hard to believe as well. Still, we've gotta give props where they are due. So grab this game next time you're at the store:





Halo 2 is a must-own game. The original adventures of Master Chief rocked the Xbox back in 2001. This: went on to spawn countless awe- . some Red vs. Blue video clips. The PC version; not so much. The muchhyped—and steroid-riddled—sequel, a though, looks to answer the shortcomings of the first game as the Covenant Invades Earth.

Hopefully, this means no countless: waves of mindless Flood to fight this time, just a one-man war against an organized allen menace. Another huge change this time around is mültiplayer. Multiple scenarios, weapons, support over Xbox Live, and the ability to carjack your opponent's ride midfight ensure that we'll be playing? this between marathon Half-Life 2 sessions.

ALSO CHECK OUT: Grand Thatt Auto: San Andreas (PS2). MechAssault 2: Lone Wolf (Xbox)

>> Mech love, not war. A cool mod for the aging Half-Life engine: Pilot Macross-inspired bots in a sweet battle to the death. Go to www.mechmod.com >> Blank slate. Major delays for Tabula Rasa means 2005 can't come quick enough. >>



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## Secret Shopper

#### We send a kid undercover to try to buy M-rated games



xcuse me. Do you have True Crime: Streets of L.A?" I ask, knowing full well that it's an M-rated title. "Sure, dude,"

the guy behind the counter says without batting an eye as he sells me the game. Score one for the high-school freshman. At this point, you're probably wondering, "Why is CGW trying to corrupt a semiimpressionable, admittedly young-looking 15-year-old?" To prove a point.

The ESRB rating system has done a good job of rating games. The question is if those ratings are being properly enforced and if people even understand the rating system. In the same manner that a kid can't get into an R-rated movie without adult supervision, underage gamers are supposedly not able to buy M-rated

games. CGW tried this experiment in San Francisco a few years ago, and kids were able to buy adult games without a hitch With 10 stores targeted, it was time to hit the streats of Los Angeles to test our theory and see if anything had changed

#### THE EXPERIMENT BEGINS

Armed with a tape recorder, digital camera, and "special operative" Greg by my side, our first stop is Circuit City Doom 3 is one of the gorlest and most hyped titles of the year-and it will be mine in the home stretch, a female clerk is ringing me up when some supervisor-type guy comes over and says, "Excuse me, you can't buy this game It's M rated." "So? I've bought a bunch of these before." OK, so I fied. "Your parents aren't with you,"

he says. Shut down, I'm sure my mom's glad he stuck to the rules, but man, what a hard-ass

Next on the list is an EB Games at the local mall. If one branch let me buy an Mrated game (that's where I got True Crime), maybe my luck would hold up at another location. Not a chance, I pick up an M-rated title and get ejected from the store before even reaching the register Clearly, the morality-or the training-is different at every store.

#### WORST BUY

My trip to Best Buy met with some really strange results. The sweet woman at the register changed moods quickly upon seeing the M-rated game in hand. My nst not was to stay calm, act maturely and use the biggest words in my arsenal to try to change her mind. She got angrier. This clearly wasn't working. While she wasn't willing to sell me an M-rated game. she was more than happy to give me the finger, Irony duly noted.

had the most success at CompUSA, buying both the controversial Grand Theft Auto: Vice City and Doom 3 there. I dign't even have a conversation with the clerk at the register, there was just the blip of the barcode reader Ditto at Kmart, Granted, there were no games worth the effort, except for the outdated No One Lives Forever 2: A Spyin HARM's Way. The cashler knew more about Martha Stewart than the ESRB

As it turns out, every store may have the same rules, but it's at the whim of the workers and their managers whether or not I can buy games. When I was denied a copy of Doom 3 at Gameland, a mom-and-pop store, I asked the owners why I couldn't have the game. As a small store with no other customers inside, they clearly could have used my sale. Instead, the man simply says, "You shouldn't be playing this game." You know, they were trying to help me, I can respect that. S Corey J. Padnos

Check compares the ratings of the major gaming press with GameRankings.com; which averages all published reviews.

GANE	Cot :	CON	To the same of	1200	S. Commercial Commerci	A LANGE	Control by the second
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NEWS >>> Set phasers to dork, SF-based Perpetual Entertainment has acquired the rights to the coveted Star Trek license to create FEEB · an MMO game in which you don't control a Trekkie. >> BioWare says Jade Empire will eventually come to the PC! >>

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CHAT ROOM INTERVIEW

## ne AlM Game

#### ₹ Mythic Mark . CGW - Instant Message

File Edit Insert People

CGW: Hey there, Mark; it's Darren from CGW.

Auto response from Mythic Mark: I am currently away from the computer.

CGW. Hello? Mark? You there? Greeeast, just sitting here, all alone. In a chat room, This is sad, I'm supposed to be chatting with Mark Jacobs, cofounder of Mythic Entertainment You know, the duys behind Dark Age of Comelot. sigh. . Mythic Mark returned at 12:06:10 PM.

Mythic Mark, Hell thene! Sorry about the delay.

COW: Ha ha, it happens. Say. I've been meaning to ask: with all these MMOs and so little free time, aren't there are only a finite number of people to play these games?

Mythic Mark, bus, even if you pelicus that only a small necessarie of james are our ical) interpolar application. For play only grammes, there is still room for the interpolation of the properties of the contraction of the contrac

CBW: Then what's going to bust us out of this Age of Disappointment?

Mythic Mark, will it spends or now you want to look at things. If you are talking should there is a now place with a wifer the best bet The whoreful in me all got with the best bet The whoreful in me all got with the hours in nover all state here the I had out the fund the hours, which is the doubt many names I ll state here the I had out that fund the in a way, is seen, is seen, is seen, in the doubt who sell more concests of the mental and other order gots.

CBW: Even your upcoming sci-f: MMO? :p Serlously, though, what about Imperator?

Mythic Mark foce one I won't I've come to take one of the most important on the on in pisto o-the Consistion from Pep plicaning eth Imarial city of a star a the relation flagorius. In the game Imperial military the non-the filter of the second tion happens, a new flourible is born in the first the to the game will take place propasity, a couple of hundred your from the sy

CBW: Upry cool idea, but it won't be a laser-gun version of the same of MMORPG?

Mythic Mark, with Instruction make a fantas, MMARCS with laster pistol 100 km to 100 k different from the different new force word to be the west transcribed the matching or of the interior of the force that the different and the terms of the force that the second of the rippy with an runtition is grane with so be evolutionary elements. If this game is unit Malf or per than file iserable.

CGW: Going back to these sci-fi elements for a second, does that mean there will be flight elements? First-person-shooler combat?

Mythic Mark FFC-type hing go Flight not kelly as I don't want to promise some thing we might not to the trial live in go bloose Imperator is an NFC, but I think that piph as an RPG it is in the trial of the good of the second of the second

CGW: CK, can you go into more detail about how Imperator is going to be borrowing from other genres?

Muthic Mark; in terms of the EPS genre the total the we man to ombat exciting, tact. call and rown and enallenging Council in mind Milliam's is anything but that One of the things we are focusing on , , has to make a material material for lette Interminfoldry grow we we also looking neavily at moreous as seems option, require our method of the same place but we can additional that are not in tiple to it are more geared to socialization among the players

DGW: How would you make a game more FPS-y without the twitch factor? Muthic Mark: That's the challenge, isn't it? .- ] (we're still working on that )

CBW: Can you go into the enemies that you'll be fighting in Imperator"

Mythic Mark, First, and foremost are the Makans. These are the bird guy in it young ngonic mark. I start promises are the markers integerant from 19 by 1.1. While the population of the color of laden howevage in the make my like today 1

#### A 23 A A A A B Z H 1 M G A O CA CO

Mark Jacobs, one of the "elder statesmen" of online gamino, hed 4 whole lot more to share with us about imperator and the state of MMUs. In fact, he took Darren to school. Read the whole conversation for yourself at aimgame 10P.com.



>> Goonle In Men of Valor. Sean Astin (Lord of the Rings) is doing the voice of Pat Hodges, radioman for the Vietnam War game. Neither Chunk nor Sloth appear.



#### December 1999

He was the first human ever inducted into CGW's Hall of Fame, and how did we honor him? By

calling his very humanity into question: by stating, "Sid Meier is a virus from outer space." Two decades after 1984's Solo Flight, Meier is still going strongstrong in only the way an allen canwith Sid Meler's Piratesi due for release later this year. Age of Empires II was our cover story, getting a big, fat five-star rating. We really really loved the trebuchets. A lot.



### December 1994

Are you there, God? it's me. CGW. Why did we put a battle cruiser on the cover? Did we actually think

that warships and yuletide cheer went hand in hand? And did we think the ... Illustration of an out-of-control Santa :: sled barreling in for a tallhook landing on an aircraft carrier somehow bespoke of peace on Earth and goodwill to men? And what about the elves manning the antiaircraft guns? And what's with the elven butt crack? What is wrong with us?



#### December 1989

In a defining moment for CGW; Russell Sipe announced the pro-

motion of Johnny Wilson to editor. Johnny would go on to run CGW for nigh onto 10 years, becoming virtually synonymous with the mag. He'd also be the only writer in CGW history to refer to Klerkegaard and actually mean It. Another defining moment: Charles Ardal reviewed the very first Prince of Persia game and procisimed, "Prince of Persia is a tremendous achievement." We're hoping the next game, Prince of Persia: The Warrior Within, can earn the same sort of accolades—we're betting it will since Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time managed to snag our Action. Game of the Year award for 2003.



COVERT OPERATIONS

## Different Joint, Different Ops

#### We got the intel on the new Joint Ops expansion

en-HUTI Going behind enemy lines (that is, getting a few people at NovaLogic a little drunk), we scored the exclusive inside scoop on what's coming up next for the Battlefield-killing FPS game. The expansion, entitled Joint Ops: Escalation, has the conflict in Indonesia (from the original game) spilling over into other parts of Asia. Rebel troops have gained support, and the Joint Ops forces have a whole new set of headaches pending in Southeast Asia.

#### WAR RAGES ON

You're still battling up to 149 other people online, but the big changes are really more vehicles, tweaks to the engine, and how the game plays in Escalation, you get to play on 15 new multiplayer maps. which include industrial complexes, military bases, and airports—to name a few. To help defend these locations, you'll have access to new emplaced weaponry that if you're not careful, can overheat

Speaking of defense, you can suit up your troops with Interceptor body armor. If you don't, the new localized player

damage model will have you hurting. If you get shot in the leg, you'll be limping to the next waypoint, a hit to the arm can mess with your aim. When going on the offensive, you'll be able to choose your ammo type (full metal jacket and so on).

#### **MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION**

As you'd expect, there are also a whole tot of add tions to the arsenal on both sides of the fence. From early looks, we floure that there are about eight new vehicles and nine new firearms. But there's a great deal of parity here. For every MIA1 Abrams tank that the Joint Ops forces roll out, the rebels can fight back with a T-80U

Aside from the tanks, we know that there are Kawasaki KLR 650 motorcycles for quick insertions, AH-64A (and Ka-52) attack helicopters, and a couple of antiair vehicles. New weapons include items you might expect, such as the G3, G36, FN-FAL, MP7, and P90 We, however, are psyched to see the Javelin in action. These man-portable, fire-and-forget antitank missiles can be deadly in the field M Damen Gladstone



#### **Battlefield** Vietnam W

លម្ងាចរាជាការជាមន្ត ៥០៣/៩៤២នាំ

A SHOP THE RESERVE developers take the time # give their fens free entre a genie is released, and EA/DICE's recent WWII mod 🎏 Battlefield Vietnam causes equal amounts of exhibitation and depres ion. Exhibitration because we met in se what some of the best Rattiefield 1942 maps look into a the enhanced Sattleffeld Vietnam ingine, but depression because the hree included mass are so goes that they leave us wenting more

The Philippines, two Jime, and also telend mage are all repressi ed here, stathered in enough folias o make the original maps look ownright rustic. Everything is comd in brand new textures that give me:game a grittler feel, even as this improved special effects make it loci hat much more like an over-the-tom M/Will action flick. Players also get ortars, more weapons mounted of shicles, and a brand-spankin'-new Hampthrower for binder budfan

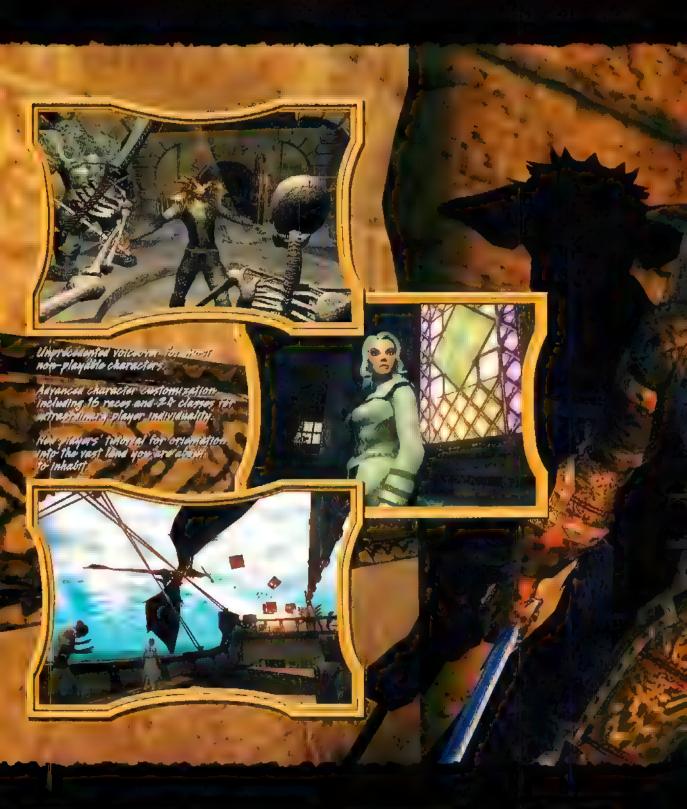
reting for some more develop Present legitlepper The U72004 eam has two exclusion levels fail Mindows XP users www.unregitournelites.com allroad Tycoon 3 fenatics can loweload a free expansion paciwww.poptop.com) that includes new maps, eight new trains, and min customization tools

## millions have experienced



The adventure.





TEEN

Suggestive Themes Use of Atcohol Violence

ESRE CONTENT RATING

Gaine Experience May Change During Online Play

AVAILABLE OFF

SOFTWARE SOFTWARE





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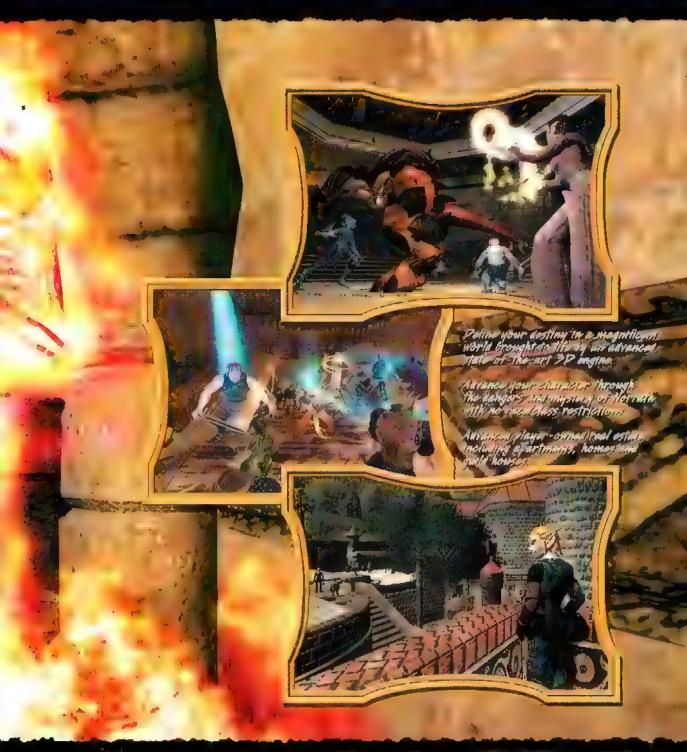


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## TO JOIN The quest.



Behold the future of online gaming: the rich, inviting world of EverQuest II. Millions have experienced the legend, now it's time for you to join the quest. Choose your side, sharpen your weapons, practice your magic, and embark on a journey filled with majestic landscapes, bustling cities, ancient dungeons—and adventure beyond your dreams.



## EVERQUEST

WHERE ADVENTURE COMES ALIVE





e've been talking about the game industry and Hollywood merging for a good long time. But music? Recently, MTV2-

the music channel that actually plays music-has started "modding" its videos. Video Mods, which started running September 18, has already completed its first "season" for the network (eightepisodes shown every other Saturday),

#### ROCK: THE GAME

Why include videogame characters in music videos? Who decides which ones are featured? One source, under anonymity, confided that the games are chosen on a paid basis. Basically videogame publishers pay consideration fees to get the rights to use their characters for these videos on MTV2 Spokespeople were unavailable for comment on this particular issue.

We can at least tell you what you've missed: Rayne from the BloodRayne series prancing around to Evanescence's "Everybody's Fool"; Fountains of Wayne's "Stacy's Mom" as performed by The Sims 2 players, and the Von Bondies' "C'mon-C'mon" with jetpacking groupies in Tribes: Vengeance, Other artists such as Black Eyed Peas, Lil John, New Found Glory, the Darkness, Christina Milian, Ying Yang Twins, and the Vines got similar treatments from games like Leisure Suit Larry Magna Cum Laude. The series seems to be fairly well received, and

according to Dave French, a spokesperson for MTV, the channel is already considering going ahead with a second season of the show

You ask us, it's about time someone like MTV picked up on this idea. The show has obviously been fostered by the Machinima movement-creating movies from videogame engines. Unfortunately, MTV2's director of programming, Alex Colletti. was unavailable for comment at press time, but we'll take a guess at one of the inspirations, the awesome "Ice Man Cometh, clip that features a bunch of Star. Wars Galaxies players groovin' to Vanilla. Ice Never seen the video? Check it out at www.windspireentertainment.com.

Darren Gladstone

#### Digging up gold in the bargain bins

r asing inexpileable re-

em, Activision sew fit to morault PC owners with a se tantly half-assed version of Spice Man 2. Developed by Fizz Factor (the same fine company that excess ed The Hobbit), this atrecity bears no resemblance to its superior cor-sole counterpart. Year, thanks for thinking so highly of the PG stoves Activision. Do yourself a fewor and stick with the good staff; the comi noir-inspired Max Payme and the

Sliver Age comic RPG Presdon Porce. You might even have some mained change to fatty real bounts:



## 

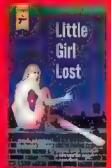
It's burning a hole in your pocket. Co spend it



Bad Moio BILL WHITE WART **PLANETLAR.COM** Lesson learned by Bruce O'Connor Never get into a fender bender with freshly divorced witch. The rising baseball star, on his way to his first spring training, acci-

dentally hits a man-hating witch's car. Rather than go through insurance, she places a hex on him that causes him to die at dawn and then get reborn every night. And you thought that you were having a أبيتكم أمجرا

Hard Case Crime novels NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY. CASECRIMECOM The dame was: loaded-and so ire these books. Mickey Spillane once called pulp liction "chewing um for the inind." Fast-for



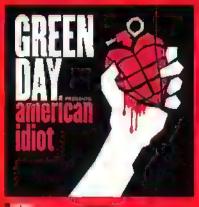
ward to today, where the Hard Case Crime line brings back the flavor of the good old days: lost noir stories and new novels written and presented in the classic style. Be sure to look for Little Girl lost, Grifter's Game, and Fade to Blonde.



#### Clerks X

HWAT AHAZONG About 10 years ago, Keyin Smith released in Indie film about wo guys that work at crappy strip mail stores. Since then ine's released a num-

ber of geek movies starring comic and videogame dorks. You know, like us. This new three-disc edition is loaded, and we mean LOADED, with extras that you need to check out: new documentaries, commentary tracks, remastered prints of the film, extra footage, and a collection of shorts that are finally compiled here.



#### Green Day, American Idiot

The state of the s Green Day fans have been waiting four long years for a new album. No doubt this pop punk-rock CD will go down as one of their more controversial pieces-as If the title didn't clue you in. Early hyp called it "a bold, polished punk opera Don't know if we'd go that far, but we definitely dig the scathing title track.

#### M3 Power razor

We know, we know, not the sexiest entry into to the celebrated 100 Bucks list, but hey don't knock itworks! We bought it nataus ye always

ineed yet another mechanized device in the office, and when

we used it for an emergency shave, the ladies sure seemed to love the silky smooth results. Either way, it's a close shave, [Groan!]



#### - DYD

\$18. WWW.AMAZON.COM

Are you all down with the G-O-D? If ou're ready, drop this awesome flick nto your DVD playand watch how bunch of kids "kick it Liesus style" in a small suburban town, in addition to having a great story, Savedi should be given props for its terrific cast. which includes Macaulay Culkin-who proves that he's got more than those Home Alone movies in him.

#### MOVIE

No. of a city three Presci \$7 MATINEE TICKET,

WWW.SHAUNOFTHEDEADMOVIE.COM Any flick that bills itself as a romantic comedy with zombies is a must-see in our books, This British tribute to Dawn of the Dead and 28 Days Later stars Shaun, a slack thirty-something who coasts through life. One night, while one the outs with his girlfriend, the dead start to rise. So who better than a drunken idjot to try and save the worldor at least his relationship?



#### Avengers

IN THE STATE OF THE COM

Nothing can be finer than watching "Their Earth's Mightlest Heroes" implode right pefore your eyes. Starting with Issue #500, they've started disassembling. Two heroes dead, one in solitary confinement—and that's just in one issue. This is all building up to when they reboot the eries with issue #1 and a whole new roster including...Wolverine and Spider-Man?

Pocket Change \$.00



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## Previews





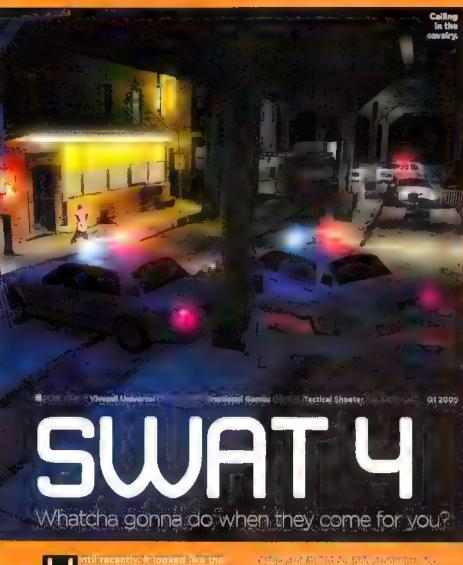
We've got the skinny on this racy new adult-magazine production simulator.



Get more info on Issue 2, plus an exclusive look at the upcoming Issue 3



This expansion to the critically acclaimed Painkiller brings more demon-killing action





SWAT transhiss was MichigaWAT.

Urban Justice had been ferubbed, and i disappointed from executive producer) mouthed off in these very pages about the faltering series. Fortunately, Vivendi 5 of Lucan ware one sycretic or productional demonstrational demonstration and survivors to make the most of the make the most of the most Series in soils means account yourseld one, authority bying inp our favorities elements to particular to particula

#### DON'T CALL IT A COMERACK

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James Miller, and the first of the

pythodaty (More in the property of the pythodate of the property of the pythodate of the py Come in especially handy in one test run Y'di (Mars, Stole) of Pr. (MWD) (MWYNIS) Mr. (\*\* (MDC)QC of CM/HRG.(\*)

(18) See Hallen (1996) and the see Hallen (1

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THUBLISHER Eldos Interactivo LEVELOPER Pyro Studios GENRE Strategy RELEASE DATE Q1 2005

## Imperial Glory

Celebrating the old world order





W

ith so many epic warfare games on the horizon, it appears that everyone wants to rule the world.

Pyro Studios, best known for the Commandos franchise, is making its newest effort stand out with majestic battles and epic skirmishes. Set in Europe between 1739 and 1830, imperial Giory gives gamers the chance to unleash their inner Napoleons.

#### A TIP OF THE HAT

We walked into this demo with visions of a Rome: Total War tribute. Though they may be separated by 200 years' worth of subject matter, the two games definitely share some common design principles—but once you're in the thick of it, you won't confuse the two titles.

After you choose from among five playable empires (Prussia, Austria, Russia France, and Great Britain), you'll see that *Imperial Glory* is a detailed account of war during the Napoleonic era. Gameplay takes place on a *Risk*-like world map where you can oversee troop allocation, as well as diplomatic duties in the single-player campaign. Or you can let your strategic advisor run the show, leaving you to fight. There are 70 technologies to

develop over the course of play, and true to tempestuous history—you can determine the political course of a country, be it a republic or dictatorship. While there is a free-form campaign that lets you rewrite the past, history buffs will appreciate controlling real-world commanders that start low and get promoted over time.

#### MASTER AND COMMANDER

The real fun starts when you're fighting over the 55 provinces and 29 maritime areas in the game. While they aren't randomly generated, the game's 50-plus maps are incredibly detailed and feature extremely interactive environments. Time of day, weather, and elevation all factor in as you plan out your battles, and the destructible buildings and land-scapes add an extra layer of strategy to the mix.

Naval battles are another key factor and are replete with a gorgeous ocean model and plenty of sloops and frigates to lead into combat. Honestly, the maritime escapades alone could make a great game—but they're just one piece of a much bigger whole. E Darren Gladstone

WAR HIME



Name: Playbay The Mandian

Parante: Asush Entertoinment Coublisher), Cyberlere Studies Cdeveloper)

Birth Date: Holidays ad 3 4 VIROLS: Gime style management game in which you central a "timaless" creadingt gariatric " stugh Hagner as he truspines through the mansion, the grotto, and the dubhouse in pursuit of notties

Ambitions: Build the Playley empires by completing mission objectives that include publishing popular issues of the magazine, establishing the Playbay Jugg fastival, and launching Playuey com Gueavisful ventures mean more manay to upgrade the maneron is already ascent teappings, throw parties, and interact with decidedly tunid young women-whose rendired brobles are actually visible during photo shoots and ...es...romantic intertudes

Turn-ons: Renders of real celebrities eventually start to show up, aside from fomous faces like carmen Electro a whopping 15 Playmoter participated in getting their livenesses into the game one such Playmate 'thanks, stacyl? actually come to our oppice to confirm that the game does a good far of re-cre-oting the marrien and the grotto. It your life's ambition mirrors that of stugh stefner's, this is your chance to live the dream

Turn-offs: You can get what you're probably seeking much cheaper and justes in you just go buy the magazine instead

People Say I Look Like: The managing editor 41m with books There's no denying the fun of introducing noughty bits into what is ascentially the fire, but the mentions largely ravolve around the minution of cuming a magazine (three free lancers! Commission photo thootal? That could get old fast even for those of us who don't already do it every single day.







#### DIDEL IME

#### Ship dates and slip dates for games in the stream

Game	Developer	Expected
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= Alaxander	Uhusoft	Navent 3004
Asheron's Call: Throne of Dostiny	t	4
Auto Assault	NCJob	٦
Axis & Alites	r a	, 4
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Univer all	TI v
Battlefield 2	Blacke (	4 0
Black & White 2	Electronic Art.	2000
# Blitzkrieg ti	CDV Softwor	100
Brothers In Arms	theroff	$F_{ij}(g)_{ij}=g_{ij}$
Cah of Cthulho: Dark Corners of the Earth	Bettando Softwork	1 ara
# Carl of Outy 2	Artistica	444
Carmageddon 4	\$CI	200
■ The Chronicles of Rindick: Escape from Butcher Bay	<b>У</b> сустов (денуство)	1.1
City of Villains	No. t	9
Civilization IV	Alan	1.5
Cossacks II:     Napotugnic Ware	CoV bultware	401.261
CSI. Miami	Ubisola	NOWITH a
Onrk Age of Camelot: Catacombs	My Litt Entertranment	Desaution in 3
Oragon Empires	- क्षिण - व	n. n. 2 n.n. n. 3/4
Dreamfall, The Longest Journey	1 разгон	9 4 g
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Dungeons & Dragons RTS - vocation his	Atob	ж
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EverGuest II	Charles Service	4
F.E.A.R.	100	
■Fallout 3	Bothelin	167
■ Fmedom Fighters 2	F 2.5	
Freedom Force vs. The Third Reich	Spherical Equipological	A
Ghost Recon 2	Missoft	tycoperat
# Gotble I.: The Night of the Ravon	kelved	31
■ Gothic fil		$n_{\mathcal{F}} = n$
Gulid Wars	f/C+50ft	February Part
Half-Life 2	Vivendi Universali	Tris
Heroes of the Pac fic	Encore software	Novemb
Hidden & Dangerous     Sabre Squadren	Sat wring	(24 t n

■ New Update



(1) POSSITE VELOPE & Cryptic Studios (EN / MMORPG CLEASE FIATE Q3 2004 (Issue 2); Q4 2004 (Issue 3)

## City of Heroes:

#### Featuring an exclusive first look at Issue 3!

here's a whole lot more than new duds for superfolk coming in City of Heroes' Issue 2 update. Yep, there's the all-important cape addition, but there are also expanded missions, a better user interface, and a cleaner item-trading system. Issue 2: A Shadow of the Past contains several new high-risk trial zones. The most interesting such area is Terra Volta; completing this trial ultimately sees your hero leaping Into Paragon City's nuclear reactor, at which point you will have the option of completely reassigning your existing powers and enhancements. This should be a great way of reinventing your character; although you won't get to pick new power sets, you'll still have plenty of leeway to refine your hero's existing focus.

This expansion also introduces a reversesidekicking system, which allows you to scale your character's power level down to match your lower-level friends. All experience that you gain while in this state is applied directly to your debt, which makes for an efficient method of getting back onto your feet after a string of deaths.

#### COMING SOON: ISSUE 3!

Why stop there, though? We also scored an exclusive scoop: a sneak peek at the asyet-untitled issue 3, which will be available for the holidays. This expansion will finally move the story beyond the borders of Paragon City. Detains are still vague, but we can likely expect to see new zones outside of the city and possibly more interdimensional areas filled with new cosmic threats

Speaking of cosmic, Issue 3 introduces some new otherworldly character options. These "epic" archetypes will reward players who have developed their current characters to leve. 50. One epic slot will be unlocked for each such character, which you can use to create a "light" or "dark" themed alien character. Think of them like Superman and his Krypton an brethren stronger than mere mortals, but each with a debilitating weakness

New power sets will be introduced; we're told to definitely expect some sonic powers, and possibly archery if all the kinks can be







## Issues 2 & 3

worked out. You'll have to wait for 2005's City of Villains expansion for more new archetypes, but Issue 3 has one other major addition to tide you over; the skill system.

#### UTILITY BELT

Skills are City of Heroes' answer to the ubiquitous MMO crafting system-except they're totally different. Characters will be able to specialize in one of four different skill trees: Detective, Science, Communication, and Scholarship, They can further specialize in various areas of expertise, such as Forensics or Security for the Detective tree Skills are level-independent and wholly optional; your character will be able to interact with myriad objects during the game, at which point he can attempt a series of skill checks. Success brings new objectives or perhaps

some extra experience. For example, succeeding at a Security check in a bombinfested building might reveal the explosives on your mission map

Skills are learned and improved by studying at universities throughout Paragon City. You'll earn temporary, expendable ski l boosts during missions, these are somewhat similar to inspirations but can also be converted into wisdom, which is used to add permanent skill boosts at the aforementioned universities. As with enhancements, you'll find generic skill improvements as well as stronger, more focused upgrades along the lines of dual- and single-origin enhancements. The only skill you'll need for now, though, is the patience to hold out for all this good stuff. B Ryan Scott

#### MAD SKILLZ

Skills are City of Heroes' answer to the ubiquitous MMO crafting system—except they're totally cirrerent.

#### Imperial Glory The Lord of the Rings, Bleestonic Arts The Battle for Middle-garth The Matrix Online Medal of Honor Pacific Assault Eiro de anic Artis. Middle-Earth Online Loren ■ MotoGP 3 The Movies Actions Mai NASCAR 2005 Need for Speed Underground 2 East1 -Neverwinter Nights 2 Operation Flashpoint 2 Pacific Fighters Painkli er: Battle out of Hell Playboy: The Manaton Prince of Persia. Warrior Within Quake IV RollerCoaster Tycobn 3 Shadow of Charnobyl # Scarface Vivendi UN versa Scrapland Serious Sam 2 The Settlers Heritage of Kings Sid Melor's Piratos! S Jent Hunter III ■ Spoile Horoos Splinter Cell Star Wars, Knights of the Old Republic II-The Sith Lords Star Wars Republic IN VIGHTS **■** Stronghold 2 SWAT 4 Tobula Rasa Team Fortress 2: Top Soln Ultima Online World of WarCraft B New Update

## Prince of Persia: Warrior Withio

REGAL





atari.com/demonstone





THE LORD OF THE RINGS:
THE TWO TOWERS

COMES THE NEXT GREAT SAGA OF GOOD AND EVIL

Si

The secret to survival

will lay with the dying.





PlayStation.2



















· People Can Fly

### Painkiller: Battle Out of Hell

#### Or, as we like to call it, PKBOOH!

he name of the game is still "kill, kili, kili" in Painkiller: Battle Out of Hell, an expansion to one of the most exciting first-person shooters to spray bloody demon goo across our screens in recent memory. With 10 new single-player levels and two additional multiplayer modes to choose from, you'll pick up right where the original left off, ridding purgatory of the raging undeadincluding 30 freakish new monsters-by rendering their ghoulish faces into so much mush, courtesy of various weapons. There's a new assault rifle/flamethrower at your disposal, but we remain partial to the spinning blade of the Painkillerthere's something undenlably satisfying

about slicing packs of undead soldiers into piles of gory cold cuts. Salami sandwich, anyone?

#### THINGS THAT GO BUMP

So far, we've played just one level, but we're happy to report that no one seems to have fixed what wasn't broken. Spooks still abound-in the Leningrad level, they take the form of sketetal soldiers commanded by worm-eaten superiors and a ded by what appears to be an escaped mental patient wrapped in a suit made of explosives. (Note: churning into this guy with the Painki ler may not be the greatest idea-turns out that dynamite sometimes blows up when you slice into it. Go liquie.)

The environments remain suitably creepy, rife with hellish explosions and backed by a soundtrack that actually heightens the freakiness factor, the choir sounds like It's proising the motherland even as Leningrad burns around it, punctuated by screams of terror sounding in the distance. Everything here is pretty damn intense

Battle Out of Hell was originally due out in October, but publisher DreamCatcher says that extra month will go into raising more awareness and "simply making the game perfect." If that means more he lraising carnage, we're more than willing to wait. 🖾 Kristen Salvatore

KILLTHRILLER



There's one thing that'll never change: UO's prodilection for goofy clothes. If if these raning gys are anything like the duse from *Yofimb*o,



翻車に織り配件 Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: Electronic Arts ほどの際に Midrosipe NELEASE DATE, November 2004

## Iltima Online: nurai Empire

#### Roamin' with ronin

even years after launch and Ultima Online is still going strong enough to warrant a brand-new expansion pack. EA has listened to the most die-hard fans in massively multiplayer gaming and has granted their most heartfelt request: a . Far East addition to the game world that will allow gamers to become ninja and samural. The new landmass is actually three separate sprawling slabs of real estate that make up the Tokuno Islands: (first hinted at in Ultima I, where it was known as the Land of the Feudal Lords).

While there are new home-building options, new treasure, more than 20 new monsters, and new dungeons, the biggest additions are the two aforementioned character classes. Ninia have a number of new skills—with an emphasis on stealth—, and possess the ability to take the forms of various animals (with their attendant) special abilities) and a little something called Death Strike. Yeah, that one should be pretty good.

Samurai are offensive juggernauts with skills that let them grow stronger over the course of a battle. For example, the Whirlwind attack grants a damage bonus based on a samurai's Bushido skill, increasing his damage for every enemy that surrounds him.

A revemped guild system will round out, the major additions and tweaks—which, given the clunky guildstone Interface that the game has stuck with up until now, is a very good thing. 🛭 Robert Coffey

The Word. STILL KICKIN'

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## Close Combat: First to Fight

Too close for comfort?

Ith war on the nightly news to an extent we haven't seen since Vietnam, I feel some ambivalence about Close Combat: First to Fight, a tactical FPS whose main selling point is its realism. Now, I'm not questioning the game's authenticity; it was originally designed as a training tool for the U.S. military, incorporating input from 40 active-duty Marines—some of whom are currently serving in Afghanistan or Iraq. But I can't help questioning the goal. Is this level of hard-hitting realism really what we need from our games?

### **MILITARY INTELLIGENCE**

But maybe that's just me If you want the immersive, gun-in-your-hands feeling of an EPS combined with a regulationperfect depiction of military practices First to Fight is your game. The proprietary graphics engine is nothing stunning, and the generic, largely linear missions aren't exactly gripping drama, but the game delivers on its promise of realism, thanks principally to the A.L.-driven behavior of both friendly and enemy soldiers. You're in charge of a four-man

@ First to Fight puts you in charge of a crack fireteam of U.S. Marines. (3 Even when you're not issuing active orders to your men, they'll still try to behave as their real-world counterparts would. () In some Ways, First to Fight is like playing a simulator of the nightly news.



fireteam programmed to behave at all times as real-world Marines would-even when you don't issue orders, they automatically do the right things. Sanilarly, each enemy soldier has a distinct "psychology model" that determines how he reacts to your actions. For instance, if you separate enemy troops from their leader, you can cause confusion and panic, leading to a faster, safer victory for your team

In the end, of course, all the talk of realism can't disguise the fact that the game boils down to prowling a wrecked cityscape, encountering hostile Middle Eastern soldiers, and folling as many of them as you can, I can understand why the Marines commissioned it, but First to Fight might not be for everyone Ci Charles Ardal

BATTLE WEARY



The strategic map is virtually the same as



TimeGate Studies SENSE RTERESAME CATE: November 2004

Board game makeover

xis & Ailies is the most-played war game today. Its elegant design has taught many board gamers the joys of strategic bombing and the dangers of invading Russia. Despite its history as an introductory war game, it's: never been properly ported to PCs. The last attempt was bug riddled, and the A.I. made Hitler's decision to attack Stalingrad look bright. With any luck, Atari's upcoming A&A port will fix that,

TimeGate Studios, the team behind the Kohan series, is giving this updated version of A&A a modern face-lift, marrying. the board game's classic turn-based design with modern RTS elements. Playing as any of the major WWII powers, you build armies, research technologies,

and invade enemy soil. However, your actions-rather than a fistful of dicedetermine a battle's outcome. The turnbased map has been transformed into an RTS environment, with all the army-building, resource-gathering gameplay you'd expect from the genre. Like TimeGate's other games, A&A's battles will focus on ... tactics and combined arms instead of. peasant micromanagement.

Though the departure from the board game may incite skepticism among A&A fans, TimeGate has a successful pedigree and may actually give A&A the PC gamng treatment it has been denied for solong # Di Luc

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ELECOTE GSC Game World AVAGAGET Q2 2005

### minilated E



Word on the street: The game is a heady cocktail of fantasy roleplaying and real-time strategy, You'll command armies rather than individual troops-and the battlefields can accommodate up to 64,000 units. Six nations, half a dozen spell schools, and a treasury of artifacts are just the beginning. From creature summonings to a cinematic story line filled with everevolving characters, the setup for an epic saga is firmly in place. And this is just the beginning-Annihilated Empires is the first instal ment of a trilogy

Sounds kinda book Sweet, just what we needanother foray into obscure realms of might and magic. Still, let's not forget that GSC has earned itself some respect for slinging together a promising little diversion known as S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Marketing sword-and-sorcery outings isn't the easiest task, but word-of-mouth hype can do amazing things. After all, Age of Wonders went. under the radar but not into the waste bin.

ROM Metropolis Software AVA ABIL TY Q1 2005

### Diabolique: License to Sin

Word on the street: Sorry, no softcore porn here. Just old-fashioned adventure, albeit with a twist: You play as Dark Eaville, a secret agent serving Satan himself. Apparently, angels and devils have been fighting on Earth for eons..you're simply getting in on the fun a bit late. Scenarios involve stealth, sabotage, and sniping sequences, as well as wild rides on fancy roadsters and the odd Amazon boat. Minigames and macabre run-ins render it a sinfully intriguing setup. Sounds kinda beat. Polish producer Metropolis Software has a shaky track record, which includes such shady offerings as Odium and RoboRumble. In all fairness, the team has been in business since 1992-it obviously knows enough about interactive entertainment to keep the rent paid. The jury's officially out on this one, though we suspect someone would have to sell their soul to Old Scratch to make this anything more than a sleeper hit in America





### Conquest 2: The Vurium Uprising

Word on the street: Dig Conquest, Frontier Wars? You'(I flip for its successor, which introduces four new races, as many campaigns, and more sizzling 3D sci-fi RTS encounters. Sail the stars in spacelaring vessels like devourers, basitisks, and glimmers as you collect resources, conduct research into new techno ogies, and settle differences via ship-to-ship combat. A dynamic galaxy beset with black holes and novas awaits exploration, with ancient technologies and amorphous horrors lying in wait

Spunds kinda beat, Never heard of Warthog? That's because the studio formerly known as Fever Pitch is under new management—and with great power comes great shareholder responsibility. The former upstart outfit has become part of a sizable company traded on the London Stock Exchange, and while an Enron-sized scandal isn't expected, such trans tions have a way of stifling a project's creative potential.

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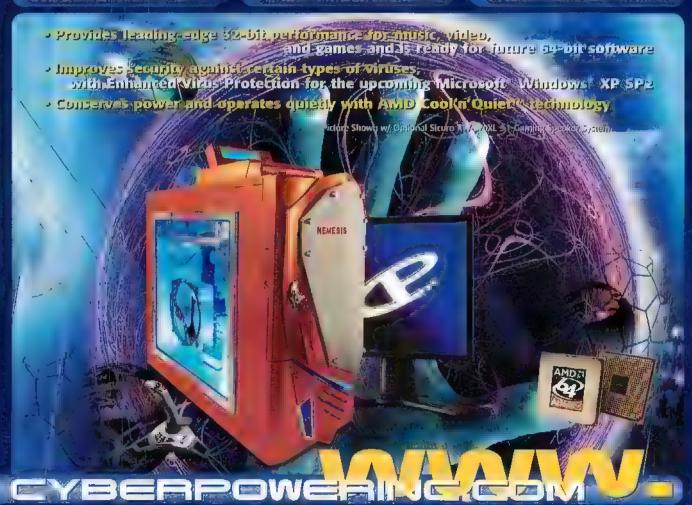
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ive years ago, Sony Online had it easy, it was 1999, "mas-Sivoly multiplayer! was not yet a common gaming term, and those who had experienced online roleplaying did not have very high expectations—the genre was too new, and the technology too limiting, to be considered anything more than an experiment for early adopters and übergeeks.

Which is why EverQuest hit the gaming community like an earthquake Ultima Online may have paved the way but EverQuest—with its 3D graphics engine and insidious carrot-and-stick gameplay was the first massively multiplayer game to garner mass uppeal The game had virtually no advance hype, but after its release, the word of mouth was tremendous, eventually making EverQuest a full-fledged phenomenon, sucking hundreds of thousands of gamers in, inspiring support groups for "EverQuest widows," and landing on the cover of mainstream magazines like TV Guide in more recent years, however, Ever Ovest has fallen out of favor. Yes, it still has its regions of devoted fans who log on

every night, ignore their families, and crowd EQ fan fairs to meet their fellow elves and dwarves in real life. But the mainstream gaming community has largely moved on. Many gamers migrated to the first post-EQ wave of MMOs, like Dark Age of Camelot and Anarchy Online, which borrowed heavily from EQ but fixed its major annoyances D

SONY GEARS UP FOR BATTLE IN EVERQUEST II

PUBLISHER: Sony Online Extertainment DEVELOPER: Sony Online Entertainment GENRE: Measively multiplayer online rela-playing game



D Now, after a couple years of false starts and broken promises, we are finally, for real, in the next generation of MMOs. Mythic's City of Heroes is a Game of the Year contender and one of the year's biggest hits, while looming on the horizon is Bilzzard's 800-pound gorilla, World of WarCraft. So Sony, with the most successful MMORPG to date, quite astonishingly finds itself in the role of underdog with the sequel to the game that essentially started it all

But If EverQuest II is far from a sure thing, Sony does not appear to be panicking—at least not publicly. A visit to its office in San Diego in early September, with the beta test in full swing, revealed a team relatively calm and confident, albeit one that was putting in 16-hour days and subsisting on pizza and

game, talking to the team, and getting peeks at a bunch of the upper-tevel stuff that, untit now, has not been revealed to the public.

What's clear is that white every MMO has learned the lessons taught by EverQuest, the EverQuest team has learned the lessons since taught by everyone else. EQ2 is not just a minor upgrade but a complete

Diet Coke. We spent two days playing the

rewrite, incorporating everything the genre now demands, while still retaining its core identity. We've covered this game at length already (see our May 2003 cover story), so in the pages ahead we're presenting various snapshots of the almost-complete game, including many things the developers have never revealed pefore. What are the toughest zones in the new game? What are the coolest new spells? There are lots of spoilers ahead, so consider yourself warned. Now read on!

### A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Norrath is not what it used to be, having experienced certification of catastrophies since the days of EverGuest. The continues of Antonics was reveged by war, then ripped apart into a series of smaller islands separated by turbulent seas. The moon of Lucilla exploded and reined fire slown upon the language other than that, though, everything's been pretty groovy





### FIVE COOL NEW SPELLS

For some players, EverQuest is and always will be about spell-casting. EverQuest if will see the return of some trusty favorites but will also introduce tons of new spells as well, all spectacularly animated and guaranteed to please your inner Gandalf.

Here are five of the coolest new spells you can expect to see in the earlier levels of the game.



### SONGSTER'S LUCK (LEVEL 17 BARD)

A bard's Songster's Luck casts a sparkling armor that protects party members from being hit by monsters and inspires them to attack more accurately.



### **GUAKE (LEVEL 44 SUMMONER)**

Not related to the Id game, this spell causes a minor earthquake and rock silde to assail the victim.



### SIPHON LIFE ( LEVEL 44 NECROMANCER)

Necromances, evil creepy people that they are, can siphon the life out of a victim and convert it into health for themselves.



### ARCANE BINDINGS (LEVEL 5 MAGE)

A mage's Arcane Bindings uses chains of arcane energy to hold an opponent in place, not allowing him to move. Then, you can whate on him with impunity.



### REGROWTH (LEVEL 12 DRUID)

Not the Viagra spell we were hoping for, Regrowth is a druid spell that heals the target party member with the power of nature.



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MASSIVELY EPIC ONLINE



### MONSTERS

When we say that the monsters in EverQuest // are "better looking" than the ones in the first game, we don't mean we want to go out with them. At least not right away. What we mean is that the designors are pouring all their talent into making them as graphically stunning as they can. Here are five of the toughest new monsters in the game.

### ICE GOBLIN

ice goblins inhabit the frozen lands of the north scheming to increase their wealth and power Though generally small of frame, they are deadly in numbers.

### SIDEN

Beautiful and exotic, sirens have been known to lure many an adventurer to a watery grave. They possess a seemingly hypnotic power that over whelms those unlucky enough to encounter

### HILL GIANT

Hilk grants inhabit

many secluded regions including the area now known as Thundering Steppes, Adventurers seeking to plunder those riches had pest be wary, lest ye be stepped on.

### SLITHERMAW

The slithermaw is an odd creature that ingers in dark places, ke Robert Coffev's basement, Originally thought to be a mutated form of plant life. some believe the slith ermaw originated in some realm beyond Norrath.

### MANTICORE

Hideous beasts that seem an unnatural hybrid of many species, manticores stay secluded in dense jungles like the Feerrott, Fierce predators, they have many deadly weapons at their disposal, such as their skin-melting halitosis



One of the coolest new leatures in Everthest it is actually not even in the game itself—it's on the Web. The just announced "Station Players" essentially gives every FOZ player a free website to check up on his characters, as well as on guild activities.

Every guild in TOZ gets a free guild website, where members can upload images. post articles, conduct chats, and so on. Though the sites will be hosted through Sony, Sony ensures that it will not be policing the sites, so quild members are free to say whatever they want without the hammer coming down. The site will include fully automated, unclated rosters that will be useful for tracking a number of stats. the number of members, average level, trade skills, and more. Guilds will also be able to recruit directly from their site.

in addition, every player will have a webpage containing a fully automated, constantly updated profile of all his characters. You'll be able to check your stats, weapons, equipment, look, and speds, and you can also check such statistics as how long you've played, how many quests you ve solved, how many times you've died, and so on-

All this automatic stat tracking has another purpose. Players will be able to go to other pages, where they can see how they are performing versus the rest of the world: EOZ will automatically track and post on a daily basis practically every stat you can think of: who killed the most creatures, who bit for the most damage, who found the most flems. Every single item in the game is tracked, so players who collect items. before anyone else-whether by doing quests, killing monsters, or making them will be immortalized forever, for all to see  $E\theta$  servers will track the tune items are found down to one one-thousandth of a second, too--so go ahead and try to claim. you found that sword before anyone else. Ye'll all know you're a big doodyhead bat.



Players in EQ2 will get their own webpages, where they can check out their characters, equipment, and stats—even when not logged on to the game.

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## THE FOUR TOUGHEST NEW ZONES

Even the most hardcore of EQ basement dwellers playing the game 24/7 are going to have a long while before they reach EverQuest II's upper levels. Shown here for the first time are the game's four toughest zones. We're talking raid-level tough, so don't even think about going there alone.



### **EVERFRQST**

An Island of eternal ice and snow Evertrost is both beautiful and foreboding, its giaclal peeks sparkle in the sun, but this is a harsh land where a single missistep can be deadly. No doubt due to the trying conditional present here, Evertrost's Inhabitants tend to be powerful creatures that do not tolerate intruders. Especially not you



### PERMAFROST

Found within the Icy landscape of Everirost, the ancient keep of Permafrost is nome to a mighty race of Ice glants. Servants to the white dragon known as Lady Vox the glants lealously guard the leep against invaders. Rumors indicate that some tragedy has befallen the dragon who rules here, but no mortal eyes have leen the truth that remains locked teep inside this frozen citadel

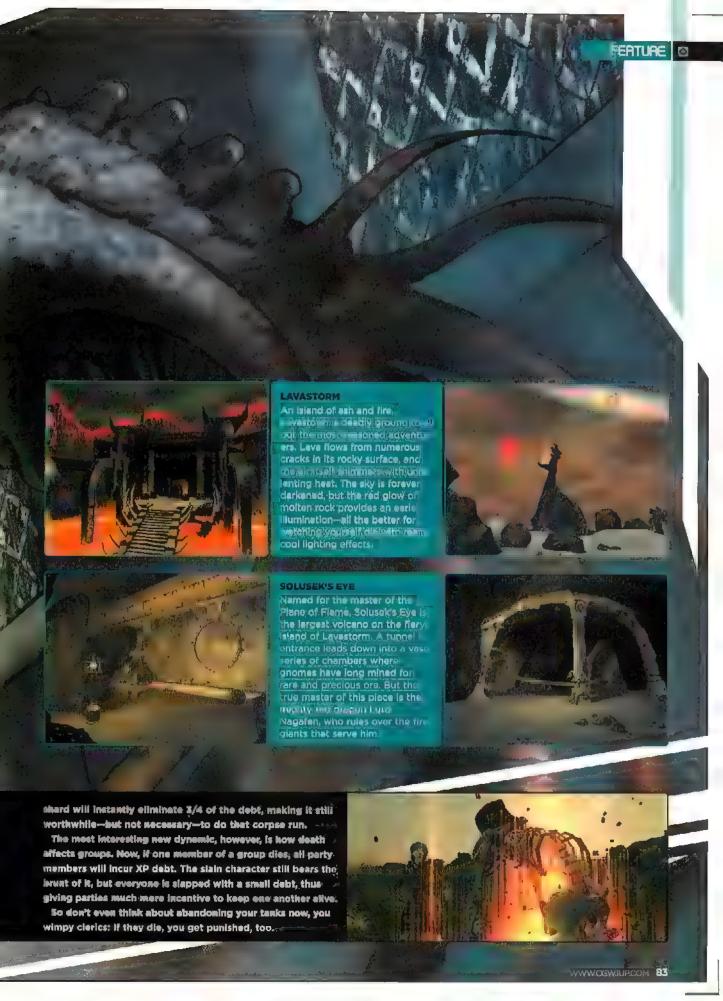


### HOW DIEATH WORKS

Death, perhaps the most hated game mechanic in all of £Q, is getting a makeover for the sequel. In the original, hapless gamers would take a huge XP hit when killed—often even causing you to level down, the ultimate humiliation—while the dreaded corpse run to retrieve your loot could be so frustrating and time-censuming that players would often just abandon their characters forever and create new ones rather than deal with it: Happily, all of that is gone in £Q2. There is still a penalty, for sure, and the designers openly acknowledge that their version

of death is still hershor than the one in World of WarCraft, But overall, death is much friendlier.

Now, rather than taking a hit on XP already earned, you will incur a delet on future XP—in essence, like a cradit card alebt. At the moment of death, you respawn back at your last bind point, while a ghostly form, your spirit shard, remains at the place you were sials. Your equipment is still with you, but it is damaged, and a red bar on your XP bar indicates a lies on any XP now gained. Retrieving your spirit



## NORRATH: THEN AND NOW

EverQuest II takes place 500 years after the first game. Though you may recognize some of the names, a series of cataclysms over the last five centuries has fundamentally altered the landscape, and destiny, of the lands of Norrath. Here is a glimpse of two familiar locations—Freeport and Geynos-as they appeared in the first game and how they appear now. As Dr. Zajus once said to Taylor: Be careful...you may not like what you find.



### PREEPOUT

Preeport was once a city of many different ballefs, but in the last 500 years, it has fallen completely under the control of the menacing Overlord, an immortal human lich named Lucan D'Lere Under his reign, the city has grown into the capital of a powerful empire, stretching its shadowy influence over the remnants of the snattered world. Adventurers who seek the path of darkness will find a place within these walls



### **GEVNOS**

Geynos stands as a beacon of hope in a world ravaged by disaster After centuries of devastation and conflict, the forces of good have gathered together in this place to bring order to the shattered lands of Norrath. What was once a small city has grown into a huge metropolis and center of commerce, ruled by Antonia Bayle, the fetching lass gracing the cover of this magazine. Those adventurers walking the path of light call this place their home.



Choose to swear allegiance to 1 of 7 different clars, then use an army of vampire powers to complete quests and gain experience.

# AMPIRE THE MASQUERADE BLUUDLIJES

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Gut sacked in to the streets of Los Augeles, where the options are endless and the dangers are boundless.



Interset with mortals and other vampires in a world that reacts to clan, gender and dialogue in this deep, immersive RPG.





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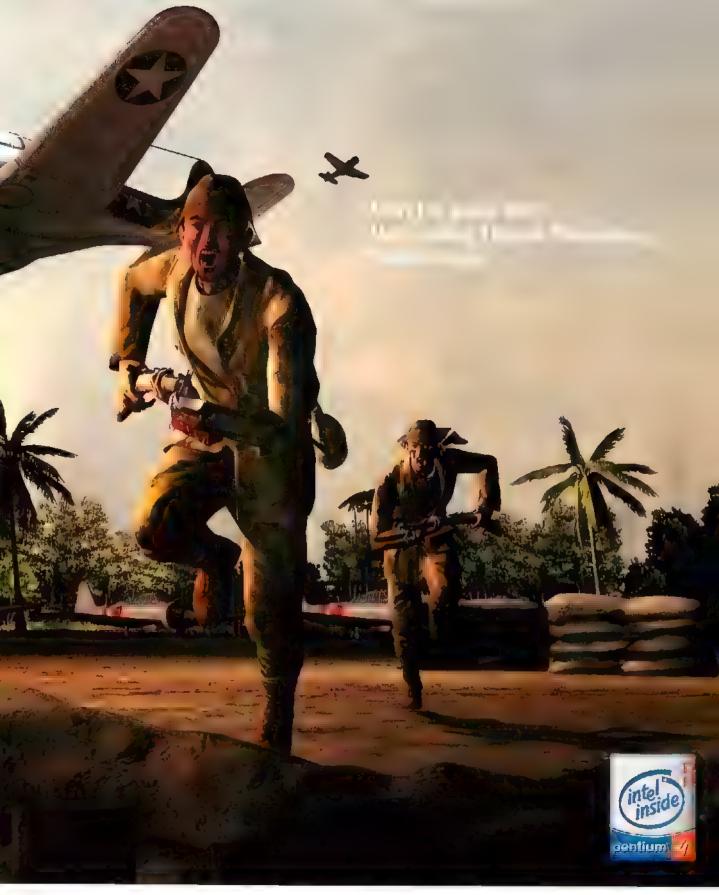
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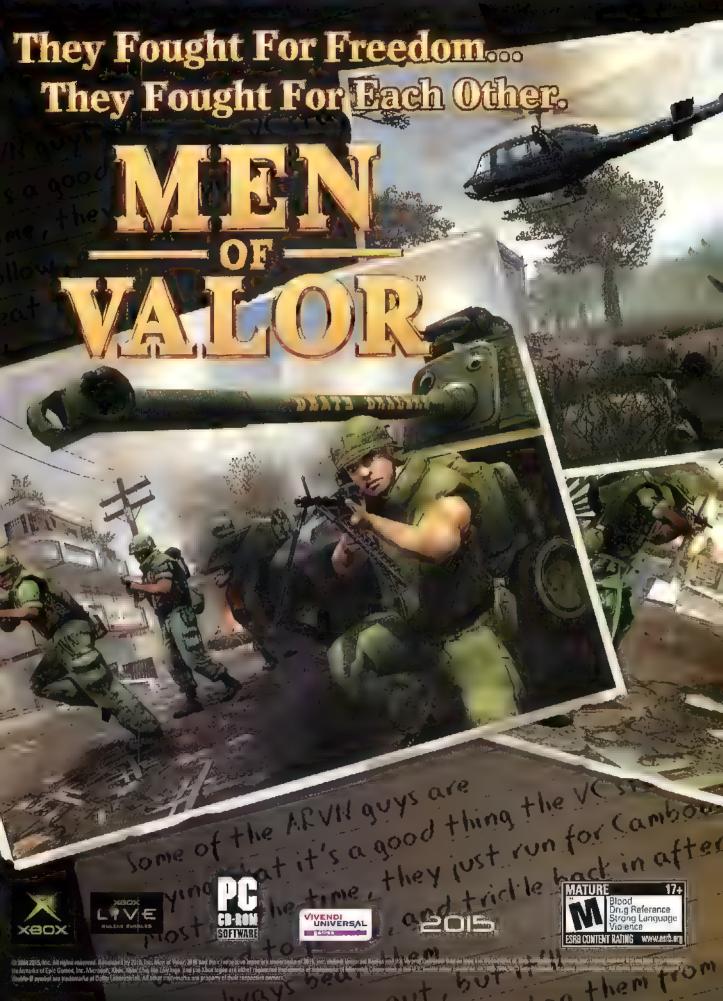
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## REVIEWS Tough love for weak minds







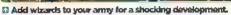
2 Zambies with bubbling green plague shields!

PURCISHER Gathering DEVELOPER TIMOGATE Studies GENRE RTS ESRE RATING T REQUIRED Pentium 4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM, 700MB Install, 64MB videocord RECOMMENDED: Pentium 4 2.0GHz, 512MB RAM MULTIPLAYER LAN, Internet (2-8 playors)

# Kohan II: Kings of War

A boid sequel to a bold original







And the walls came tumbling down.

Everybody wants o rule the worldjust maybe not guite like this



O LINE DE Three sides, one war, and maybe seven hours



4 Unoil Short The horror, the



🖬 Hero, kohan, or rock star? You decide.



The first Kohan was a noble fallure. It solved many real-time strategy problems by eliminating peon herding, reworking the basic economics, and streamlin-

ing unit interaction. By dramatically changing the way you played an RTS, it reduced micromanagement and shifted the emphasis from twiddling to tactics. But people stayed away in droves, flocking instead to splashler conventional fare such as WarCraft III and Command & Conquer: Generals. So you could hardly blame the developers at TimeGate if they were to have chased commercial success by making Kohan II more like those other games.

### STANDING FIRM

But, to its credit, TimeGate isn't budging an inch. Apprehensive fans will be deaghted that so many of the things that made them love Kohan are completely intact in the sequel. You still assemble your cities as if they were single buildings, you still recruit and control your armies in easy-tomanage companies, you still deal with resources as a balance rather than a sum, and the shrewd tactical A I still controls the minutiae of combat. These things still form the cornerstone of Kohan's gameplay. "If you don't like it," TimeGate seems to say, 'there are plenty of other RTSes. This is how we do it."

And oh boy, do they do it. Kohan II consists primarily of armies sweeping across the map. They're searching for enemy movement, getting tangled in epic clashes, butting up against cities to lay slede to them, breaking through walls, falling back to regroup, and rushing to reinforce each other. And as it all happens, you're able to make the hard choices that keep the game interesting. Do you sell off your extra Iron for mana, or do you improve your foundry so you can support another infantry company? And do you use your limited wood to add a ranger so your infantry can speed through forests, or do you give them a complement of archers? And you can afford to ponder all these questions because Kohan doesn't bog you down with the unit baby-sitting that's cen-



tral to so many other real-timestrategy games.

### FICTION AND **FACTION**

But for all the similarities to the original Kohan, there's plenty of new con-

tent and technology. Most of the units are carried over from the first games, but they're more neatly divided into six separate races with distinct play mechanics The mythology is as inscrutable as ever-I played the original games extensively, and I still don't know a drauga from a gauri. much less what the hell a kohan is-but. the themes are recognizable. The elves have growing buildings, the undead can field large armies of rotting zombies, the orcs have beastriders, the humans gather lots of gold, the dwarves have strong buildings, and the devils have weird monsters. More or less. It gets more complicated when you take into account that most of the races can choose among different factions for unique heroes, bonuses, technologies, and units. In fact, it's all a bit messy, but it gives you plenty of room to flex different strategies. Although the basic gameplay is simple, there's a staggering amount of depth and flexibility

The new 3D graphics engine is muscular and colorful, even if the artwork is often unimaginative. Someone should tell TimeGate that the undead and night cives from WarCraft III called, and they want their artwork back. To be fair, there are bursts of creativity that pay off knights on ostriches, glant robots, Michelin Man djinns, and snarling packs of toping dogs. The spell effects add a splash of colorfu. action, and they're actually useful as a way to see who's doing what to whom. Kohan II can be slowed down if you want to really pay attention to a battle. With the 3D graphics and the option to zoom in close,

"If you don't like it. 👊 there are plenty of other RTSes out there for you. This is how we do it."

> there's none of the first game's "ants at war!" vibe in fact, because of the fantasy setting and the powerful new graphics engine, cranked-down zoomed-in haftles can be spectacular in a way that Creative Assembly's Shogun and Medieval battles can only dream of

### **TOOLS OF WAR**

The interface is actually a

step backward from the original Kohan's, with some things buried deeper than necessary. You have to dig to look at unit stats, upgrade buildings, or research technologies. But Kohan's interface peccadilloes aren't as annoying as they would be n another RTS in which you have to simultaneously play general, lieutenant, and quartermaster. You're making broader choices here, so you can afford an extraclick to drill down a layer deeper

The fact of the matter is that there's nothing else like Kohan II. Except, of course, Kohan itself. Hats off to TimeGate for staying true to what it accomplished. And here's hoping that more gamers sit up and take notice this time around M Tom Chick

### Verdict ★★★★/i

Just say no to WarCraft and yes to Kohan II.

PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER Gray Matter GENRE Shooter ESRB RATING. T REQUIRED. Pentium III 800, 128MB RAM, IGB Install, 32MB videocard, original Call of Duty game RECOMMENDED Pontium 4 2.4GHz, 1GB RAM, 128MB videocard MULT PLAYER, LAN, Internet (2-32 players)

## Call of Duty: United Offensive

### Unremarkably remarkable

enerally, when reviewing a game, I am-at the very least-left with a couple pages of notes. But not this time: no, this time, there's simply a Post-it with one word on it: Russia, Where were all my notes? Probably somewhere back in time, when I played the original Call of Duty and loved it to death.

### **WORLD WAR 2.0**

There's more to United Offensive than the Russian campaign, but that's the part that really stuck with me-probably because that's the part that really stuck with me the first time out. United Offensive does make a few obvious additions to the core gameplay, giving you the ability to sprint short distances (perfect for running for cover) and also letting you "cook off" grenades to better control where and when they explode. But at its heart, this is Call of Duty all over again, only shorter and more difficult. Where most expansion packs try to reinvent or expand the play of the source game, United Offensive is content to re-create the original experience to such a degree that I suspected I might be replaying levels from the first game.

But when a shooter is as excellent as Call of Duty, slavish devotion may not be such a bad thing. Much like In the first game, there are three minicampaigns, each with a unique flavor: The American campaign is a heroic war movie, with GIs bravely forging ahead in the Battle of the Suige; the British levels start with a harrowing bombing sortie and leave you fighting with the resistance in a series of Guns of Navarone-style sabotage missions; and the Russian levels are something like a walk through the fires of hell during an acid hurricane—they are, as before, a chaotic and gripping triumph of game design

Less a triumph of game design are some of the challenges rehashed from the original. I could have lived without another desperate "hold the farmhouse until reinforcements arrive" scenario. Ditto the "bold the train station until reinforcements arrive" scenario. And the, well, you get the idea. A little more creativity would've been nice here. Call of Duty's signature rail shooter elements do get some reinvention, and you'll man a variety of gun





O Soviet forces assault a village.

emplacements, be they in bombers, on speeding PT boats, or amid the smoldering rubble of a Russian city.

This expansion is a compelling, dramatic WWII shooter with some of the most cinematic action ever converted into is and Os -just like Call of Duty If you're OK with that, you're going to be more than OK with United Offensive. @ Robert Coffey

### Verdict ★★★★☆

Sometimes more of the same is lust fine.

### Axis vs. Allies

The same of the sa

## Alpha Black Zero: Intrepid Protocol

### Aka Alpha Black Zero: Interminable Game

ere's a true tale of Alpha Black Zero: During one of the game's roughly 20 missions, you have to painstakingly escort a slow-moving pair of engineers down a long, twisting road. After about 20 minutes, you make it to the end and think, "Well, thank God that's over." Only it turns out that you have to march the entire way back, pick up a new team of engineers, and do the whole thing over again. So you suck it up and make the second monotonous trip. And then the unthinkable happens: The game insists that you embark on this rotten nonadventure a third time.

### **ENOUGH ALREADY!**

The moral of the story is that Alpha Black Zero. Intrepid Protocol could use some serious editing. Everything about it is too long. The enormous levels take place in a mixture of interchangeable, featureless expanses of hillocks and canyons and generically futuristic interiors. The frequent cut-scenes drag on forever-one, detailing a conversation between a motionless group of soldiers and the webcam-like interface of a government supercomputer, tips the scales at nearly 10 minutes. Hell, even the game's title has at least two too many words.





All of which would have been more tolerable if the gameplay were better Alpha Black Zero is ostensibly a third-person tactical shooter. You lead a team of five marines, who, as a group, can be outlitted with one of three weapon loadouts before each mission. Within a mission, you directly control one team member at a time but

can switch between them at will. Characters not under your direct control act autonomously, though they'll accept general orders such as "stay," "follow," "hold fire," and "fire at will " The problem is, none of this is necessary. The game may look like a squad-based tactical shooter, but nothing about it requires any actual squad tactics. By and large, your best bet is to simply let your team swarm. around you and fire at whatever they want. You'll only ever need to switch characters if the one you're controlling gets killed

However, you'll also need to cycle between everyone at health and ammo stations because they're not smart enough to reequip themselves—an oversight that quickly becomes irritating.

Unfortunately, the game fails as a pure shooter as well. Enemy design is as bland and uniform as the environments. You'll fight an indistinguishable array of soldiers until very near the end, at which point the game halfheartedly tosses in a few robot spiders. Worse, the controls are mushy and imprecise. Nothing seems solid in the world; both you and your enemies often appear to sort of float across the land-scape. Combined with the loose controls and an erratic framerate, this problem gives the whole experience a disconnected, dreamlike quality not exactly conducive to hard-hitting action.

On a positive note, the entire game can be played cooperatively over the internet On a less positive note, there's absolutely no reason to do this. Alpha Black Zero might not be the worst game ever made, but it may be the most tedious. Expression Expression for the source of the so

The moral of the story is that Alpha Black

Zero: Intrepid Protocol could use some
serious editing.

Verdict \*/noon

PUBLISHER Vivandi Universal Games DEVEL JPER Elixir Studios GENRE Strategy ESRB RATE G TMULTIPLAYER None REQUIRED Pontium III 800, 256MB RAM, GeForce 2 MX 16MB or equivalent DirectX 9 compatible videocard, 300MB install RECOMMENDED. Pontium 4 1.5 GHz, GeForce 3 64MB or equivalent

## Euil Genius

### All that's missing is the evil and the genius



f ever a game deserved to be better than it actually is, it's Evil Genius. In a world of generic copycat game ideas, here is a genuinely great and novel premise, inspired by '60s spy movies (or, more accurately, parodles like Austin Powers), Evil Genius is a strategy game that puts you in the role of an aspiring criminal mastermind bent on taking over the world. A Dr. Evil game!? How could it go wrong?

As It turns out, in a number of ways. Elixir. Studios did a nice job with the aestheticsthe animation sound, and music are charming and funny throughout—but in the more important matter of gameplay, Evil Genius blows it with inexplicable and frustrating design decisions that bog the whole thing down. Every time you try to love it, it ends up pissing you off all over again.

### MEED THE IMED

Evil Genius cribs its basic structure from

two gaming classics: Dungeon Keeper and X-Com. Half the game is a base-building sim in which you must design your underground fortress and manage the army of minions who come to serve you, as well as combat the forces of "good guys" who constantly try to invade your hideout. At the same time, you must aggressively plan and monitor your evil deeds on a world domination screen. Here, you send out your minions around the globe to steal funds and conduct acts of infamy (like stealing the Eiffel Tower) that raise your notoriety among the world's underground elite. The notoriety is a double-edged sword: It brings more evil henchmen to your fold but also increases your "heat" amongst the good guys, who will step up their efforts to wipe out your base.

So far so good And at times, as you get the rhythm of balancing your base building with your world domination plans, you will have nice big chunks of strategy-gam-



☑ My evil genius thinks it's funny that someone is being tortured. That's pretty evil.



Let's torture this guy, too.



### In the more important matter of gameplay, Evil Genius blows it.

ing fun, it helps that the game's graphics and sound, while not mind-blowing, capture the feel just right, with the kind of longue-in-cheek charm that made another spy spoof, No One Lives Forever, sp fun Elixir did a great job animating and providing localized sound for all the ridiculous goings-on in your lair-the booby traps, the prisoner interrogations, the Ping-Pong games in the break room

### THROW ME A FRICKIN' BONE

But sadly, this mostly ends up for naught, Evil Genius is a frustrating affair, suffering repeatedly from an unforgivable sin: It penalizes players for lacking information. they couldn't possibly have. The only way you can win short of cheating or using a strategy guide is to know exactly how the developers thought you should play.

Base building, for instance, while ostensibly "open ended," requires meticulous planning or you'll be faced with a mess of a layout and a re-entless A.J. that w.il destroy you. But you won't know this untiit's too late. Rooms, once built, can't be redesigned or resized, and when you're a newbie, it's simply not intuitive how big the rooms should be. Worse, it's not clear which rooms are most important—far too much is unlocked too early, so you are overwhelmed with choices, and there is no sense of priority or urgency (Hint: ignore the hotel entirely.) By the time you realize you didn't need the staff room to be quite so big and that your control room is too close to the entrance, for example, it's too difficult to fix it-your only real recourse is

to restart the game. The lack of a sandbox or skirmish mode to practice in only exacerbates the problem.

Similarly, the game is far too slingy with information on how to solve the various missions; objectives are either obtuse or simply don't tell you how to proceed. Some missions will only progress if you have minions in specific zones on the world domination map-but no hints are given as to which zones those are. Sheer luck or mindreading are your only options.

Interaction with the units themselves is often frustrating. Dealing with your henchmen-the muscle units-is the most earegrous example of this. Though you can click on them and tell them where to go. they cannot be given patrol orders or be made to stay put, so they will constantly wander off almost uncannily, to the most remote corners of your base, never there when you need them most. Your Evil Genius unit itself, which one might think would be important in a game called Evil

Genius, is actually all but useless. Not once in over 40 hours did lever feel competed to click on the unit

acts of infamy. Sadly, the acts are carried out offscreen: You never see them in progress.

Other annoyances abound. Why is room construction paused when you first create a room? Why do I right-click on an interrogation chair to select it but left-click to select everything else? Why isn't there a speed setting, so I can zoom ahead when nothing's going on? And why above all else, do I never see any of my acts of infamy, even once, any time in the game? Stealing the Eiffel Tower sure sounds like fun. Too bad the only thing I get to do is watch a timer

Evil Genius could have been great instead, it's a near miss—a great idea poorly presented and inadequately explained. And that ain't my bag, baby, & Jeff Green

### Verdict \*\*/

Evil Genius has its moments, but I wouldn't play it again for...one million dollars.





No ovil genius would be truly evil unless he cloned himself. Which is what I am doing here.

PLIBLISHER Eldos DEVELOPER Guarrillo Games GENRE Third-person Shooter ESRB RATING M RECU 🐖 > Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 33B Install, 32MB videocard, DVD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED. Pentium 4 2.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB videocard MULT PLAYER. None

## ShellShock: Nam '67

### Nothing but bad flashbacks

pparently, the official memo saying, "Games about the Vietnam War are A-OK!" has officially passed, yet that memo most likely had no statements about making any good Vietnam War-era games. Despite the presence of a good game like Viet Cong, there are, as expected, numerour mediocre games, and oh boy, is ShellShock: Nam '67 one of them.

If there's one thing ShellShock has, it's atmosphere. The jungle levels look pretty convincing, there's lots of soldler chatter in and between missions, and there's the requ.slte '60s-era soundtrack This atmosphere nearly makes you forget that you're playing a pretty standard third-person shooter

### **VERY RAW RECRUITS**

Despite the atmosphere liberally poured all over ShellShock, there's a distinct lack of poksh when it comes to the game and even the aforementioned atmosphere. Enemies look clever at first. "Hey, they re hiding behind a rock and throwing grenadesthat's good A.I.I" one might proclaim. Yet you'll notice that these same enemies always approach you from the same pathways in handy clusters—which makes them feet tess like vicious guerrilia fighters and more like blood-spurting bullet sponges You're sent on stealth missions that he ther require nor use any stealth; you're told to silently sice sentries, but due to a total lack of feedback (there's nothing remotely resembling a visibility or stealth meter), it's often easier to just shoot everyone as though you're in a shooting level. You're often told to follow your commanding officer, except, en he usually follows you



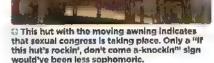


The graphics range from serviceable to decent.

instead (thankfully, the levels are generally linear enough to figure out where to go). Your interface for defusing booby traps (a quarky-looking maze that uses the arrow keys) is sloppy and unnecessary—not only did I fail most of my defusings, but I didn't even get hurt as a result. Any levels that nvolve a building seem rushed in design, since the buildings are little more than bare walls with brown or gray textures and the occasional chair. Despite using the mouse. and no matter what sens tivity setting you use, your aim feels as imprecise as it would on a console controller

### OOOH, ME 50 HOARY!

The almospheric presentation reeks of trite, clichéd stereotypes on both sides. You have the bald American who curses liberally and is so transparently sociopathic that his handle is "Psycho," and he, predictably, acts the cruelest and least levelheaded in all cut-scenes and scripted events. You occasionally see bodies contorted in ways that are supposed to shock you, but they actually remind you more of the same art you ve seen in Doom II. The Vietnamese are portrayed as either pathetic, helpless civilians (whom you can generally kill without penalty-they usually just die, but some will actually attempt to fight you) or deviant enemies. Particularly unsettling is a



sequence in which you literally have to kill. every Vietnamese prostitute in a brothel, followed by an even more unsettling (and misogyny-soaked) cut-scene in which a Vietnamese mama-san is brutally tortured.

Despite the noble claims to portray the Vietnam War as a harsh and brutal experience. ShellShock feets more like a shooting gallery with occasional expletive-filled dialogue and a Rolling Stones soundtrack No atmosphere, cirché or not, can correct its overall mediocrity. ShellShock tries to be Apocalypse Now, but ends up The Green Berets & Thierry Nguyen



A bad third-person shooter is still bad even with '60s music and Vietnamese prostitutes.



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PUBLISHER Ascaron Entertainment DEVELOPER Ascaron Entertainment GENNE Strategy (1988 RATING T REGULARED PONTIUM III 700, 256MB RAM, 700MB Install, 32MB videocard RECOMMENDED. Pentium 41.6GHz, 612MB RAM, 64MB videocard MULTIN, AND REQUIRE

## Port Royale 2

### Buy low, sail high

ort Royale 2 makes only surface Improvements to its predecessor, but these changes have deep effects. Almost every element has been adjusted, and the result is a simpler, more satisfying game. The premise is the same: As a captain in the burgeoning Caribbean settlements, you can sall for the French, Spanish, English, or Dutch-or you can abandon all alleglances and turn pirate. You trade goods, attack convoys, help develop towns, and hunt pirates for fame and fortune.

The experience system is noticeably Improved. Your ability to expand your production facilities is not based on just wealth, but also on your standing with individual towns, in order to build production. facilities in a settlement, you must improve your standing with the locals by supplying needed goods or providing donations. Once you're established, you can further improve your standing by building clvlc structures such as hospitals and schools

Your standing also affects prices at the market, which is important: Port Rovale 2 is about making money, and trading is the most lucrative path. The major trade Improvement is the addition of completely automated trading routes. Once a captain has enough experience, you can assign him to a route. The captain will make all the buying and setting decisions himself, unless you decide to manage the routes, and once you have a few trade routes set up, you'll literally be making millions-towns will even come to you for financial assistance

### WARSHIPS

Combat still plays a large role in the game. but the system has been given an overhaul-It's easier but not necessarily better, you can control only one ship, and even with a large fleet, you have only one vessel at your disposal at any given time. You can select another ship from your fleet, but the first will become inaccessible for the remainder of the fight. The problem with this system, though it's easier to manage, is that the same restrictions don't apply to your enemies. Even when you outnumber your faes, your ships can get pummeled fairly quickly This new system is even more problematic when you are assaulting towns or pirate hideouts because a well-fortified harbor will tear through your single ships

Dueling is another new addition. Pirates



Using automated trade routes is the best way to make money quickly.

### Almost every element has been adjusted for a simpler, more satisfying game.



The dueling is now and fairly simple, but it's a nice break from the constant sailing.

will always challenge you to duels when you breach their hideout defenses, and ship captains will often challenge you to duels in order to save their crew during boarding attacks. The dueling system is easy-just block and attack-but it makes for a nice diversion from the otherwise constant seafaring

Questionable combat changes aside. Port Royale 2 is much improved. It isn't a deep game, but it offers enough variety so that it stays add ctive ong after you've mastered its somewhat simple formula. There are even plenty of side quests to keep you occupied while your captains



@ Governors in friendly towns will give you missions, though the rewards are sometimes a bit too skimpy.

follow their trade routes and make you money: You can rescue the governor's daughter, block trade routes to enemy towns, or just hunt for hidden treasure

Like its predecessor, Port Royale 2 is somewhat slow to start. It can take a long time to earn enough money to explore beyond the initially accessible towns. But once you have a nice fleet at your command, it's a continually engaging experience. 🖸 Ron Dulin

### Verdict \*\*\*...

A simple but addictive combination of trading and Age of Sall combat.



A

JEL SHER Matrix Games DEVEL LIPER Adanac Command Studies GEMIE Was FERB RADING Not Rated REQUIRED Pontium III 400, 64MB RAM, 200MB Install RECOMMENDED Pontium III 800, 128MB RAM MULTIPLAYER PREM (2 players)

## Campaigns on the Danube

### Torture for control freaks

am a geek. Still, I didn't realize quite how bad I was until now. Nothing—not even having had women run away screaming at the sight of me, nor the same women falling dead of boredom when cornered and subjected to my discourses on the defects of the Ming military organization—tells me I'm a geek as much as liking this game does.

Campaigns on the Danube Isn't your average war game. Instead of catering to the mania for control shared by most war gamers. Danube puts you in the role of a Napoleonic Army commander, with all of the restrictions and frustrations faced by those men, short of saddle sores. There are no battalions to maneuver, you just send messengers with vague objectives, like attacking or retreating toward certain towns, to your corps commanders and then hope that their divisions obey. These messengers take hours of game time to reach their objectives and may even be captured or killed along the way. With full fog of war, you won't even know if your messages arrive. Even when the messages get there, your commanders may

never carry out their instructions.

Danube adheres to Napoleon's guip that "amateurs discuss tactics and professionals discuss logistics." There will be no brilliant tactical double envelopment in battle, and most of your game time will be spent managing supply wagons and marching routes. This might sound like a very dry game, but the gameplay is surprisingly refreshing especially since so many other war games have moved toward micromanagement. This game is almost educational in that it Illustrates the difficulties faced by the commanders of the day. As a PBEM game. Danube can be quite fun, and it allows tactics, like cavairy raids and feints, that few other games do.

There are a few faults with Danube. The interface is clunky, the A.I. is hapless, and it takes too long to replay a PBEM turn. There also aren't enough scenarios. Your efforts are focused on the two campaigns fought along the Danube between Austria and France in 1805 and 1809, and there are a couple of variants for each—but since you usually have five or six units to issue orders.



The hapless Austrian corps commanders concentrate too slowly to fight off a French thrust. No, really—that's happening right there.

to each turn, even the longest campaign scenario doesn't last very long.

This game definitely isn't for everyone, but masochists who find fascination in supply wagons, attrition, and the confus on of horse-powered communications might find it enjoyable, and become closer friends with their inner geek. 20 Di Luo

### Verdict \*\*\*

Feeding 50,000 men has never been so much fun.

T

### Galactic Civilizations: Altarian Prophecy

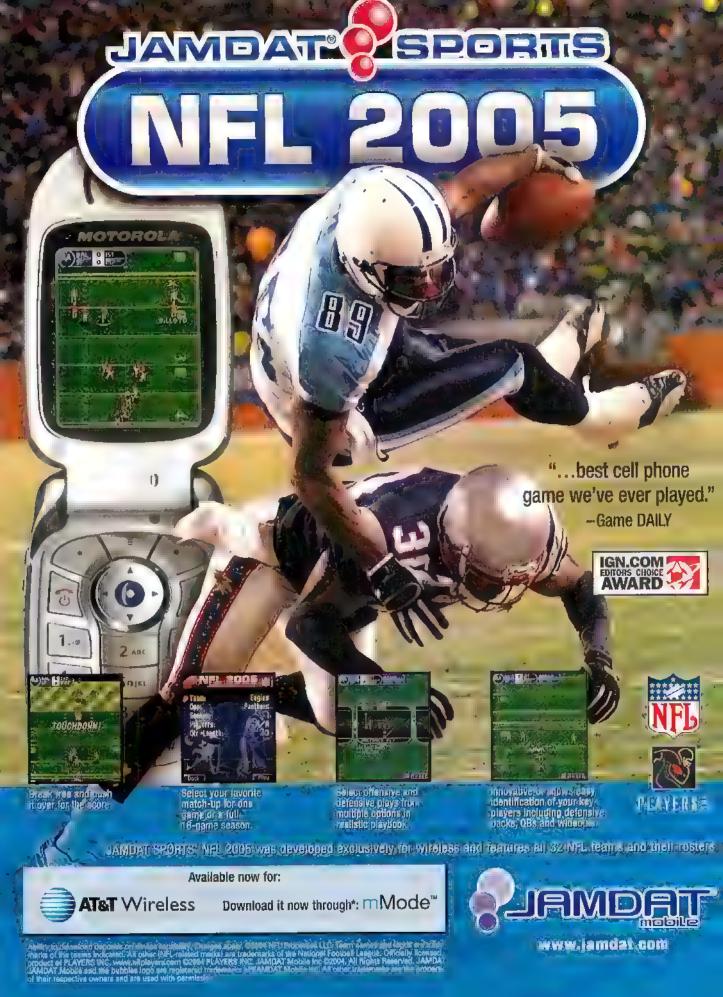
The drengins are back in town



The real bonus here is the campaign editor, which allows for the creation of linked campaigns.



Verdict \*\*\*





AHEAD OF THE GAME

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A bonus supplement to

# Final Fantasy on the Go

Some of the biggest RPGs of all time come to cell phones in Japan.





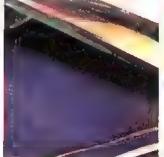
























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# MOBILE RPGS TAKE OVER JAPAN

Thought these classic quests were addictive before? Now you'll never have to put them down.

Cell-phone games are incredibly popular in Japan, especially ports of '80s arcade classics and simple puzzlers. So when Square Enix announced it would be bringing the first games in its two largest franchises—hell, the two largest franchises—hell, the two largest franchises in Japan, period—not to mention a new spin-off of one of the most popular RPGs of all time to cell phones, it helped validate the idea of "real games" on phones. Next year, it's likely the company will bring some, if not all, of these games to the States.

## Final Fantasy Mobile

The story of Final Fantasy hasn't changed in the past 15 years: Four light warriors set out to defeat four elemental fiends, relight their color-coordinated orb, and cleanse the world of evil. The gameplay is based on the older WonderSwan Color remake, not the new Final Fantasy I+II; Dawn of Souls for Game Boy Advance. Enemy graphics and battle screens are much improved, but the world map, towns, and dungeons resemble a high-color version of the original NES game.

The simple battle system lends itself extremely well to one-handed play, a must for Tokyo's crowded subways. The phone's "D-pad" moves the characters and cursor, while the center button controls speaking and confirms commands.

### Dragon Quest Mobile

Dragon Quest (known as Dragon Warrior in the States) tells the story of a noble hero who saves the princess, defeats the evil Dragonlord, and brings peace to the land...while killing tons of slimes along the way. The gameplay is the same as ever: 1-on-1 battles are based around basic menu commands. The graphics have been completely redrawn in a high-resolution, high-color style that blows away previous versions, including the Super Nintendo remake. The screen tears occasionally when scrolling the field map, but the batties are free of graphical blemishes.



Final Fantasy Mobile

The spell effects are particularly impressive and as animated as anything found in *Dragon Quast Vit.* Of Square Enix's two cell-phone games, *Dragon Quast* is far and away the more impressive.

# Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII

When Square announced it would make a prequel to Final Fantasy VII starring the antiheroic Turks, fans rejoiced. When, 10 seconds later, Square announced the game would be exclusive to cell phones, fans were confused. Now that the beta test has begun, it's time to take another look at Before Crisis.

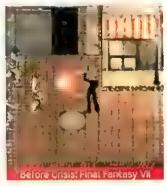
Set six years before the events of Final Fantasy VII, Before Crisis promises to give gamers the "truth" behind the Turks and the shadowy Shinra company. Favorite characters Rude, Elena, Rufus, and Reno all show up, but there are two new Turks, too: Verd, a grizzled man with an unknown past, and Shion, the current "leader" of the group. Gamers, however, take the role of "new recruit," speaking with and receiving missions from their more famous NPC superiors. A large advertisement in Tokyo's Shinjaku station suggests Sephiroth, Cloud, and Zack all make cameos-though how the story ties into Final Fantasy VII's is still unclear. In the world of Before Crisis, the new rebel group Avalanche is starting to become a thorn in Shinra's side, and the Turks



Dragon Quest Mobile

have been assigned to stop those rabble-rousers.

After accepting a mission from the Turks, players move around the urban environments. Enemies are engaged directly on the field map, but sneaking past without being seen is possible, thanks to the prerendered graphics' overhead perspective. The battle system is action based; players have access to several different attack and magic techniques. Male characters attack with a melee rod up close, while female characters use a ranged weapon. The game also features a unique Materia magic system: Players "create"



Materia by taking pictures with their call phone's built-in camera, and the dominant color of the photo determines the Materia type.

The most promising feature of Before Crisis is network connectivity. Players who are captured or overpowered can ask other players to spring them from jait or join forces against their foes—even in the middle of a battle. Players can also swap messages and Materia.

Square is already promising additional playable characters down the line. Combined with the easily expandable mission-based structure, it's clear that Square is treating Before Crisis as a long-term prospect.

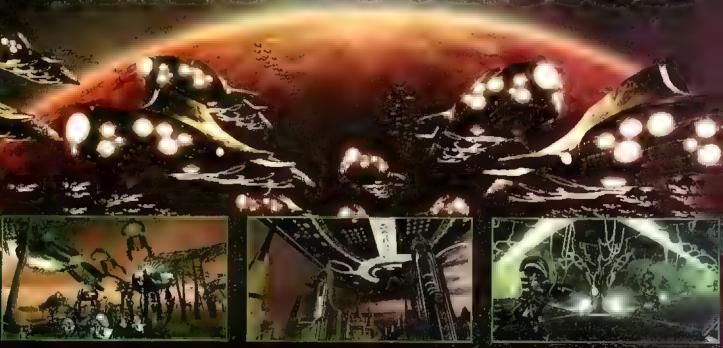


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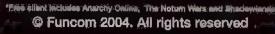
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# RIFTS: PROMISE OF POWER

# N-Gage plays host to a little old-school roleplaying

For fans of Kevin Siembieda and his pen-and-paper rolaplaying game Rifts, the dream of a videogame based on the popular franchise has long been unfulfilled. For 14 years, Siembieda refused all licensing requests for a videogame, but that has finally changed.

Nokia's announcement at this year's E3 came as a shock to fans; the first videogame to be based on the epic role-playing game Rifts was to launch on the N-Gage in the summer of 2005. Why did Siembieda say yes to a company like Nokia, and is it even possible to incorporate such a vast universe into a mobile game? At a press event in Vancouver, Nokia finelly revealed the first details of the

upcoming Rifts: Promise of Power.

The pen-and-paper Rifts was published by Siembieda, who had been playing D&D and other RPGs since the 1970s but found the rule set frustrating. He wondered why there couldn't be one set of rules for all games. That was when Palladium Fantasy and the first "universal" RPG rule set were born. Over the next few years, megahits like Robotech and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles came from this game system. Even with all these successes under his belt, Siembieda still felt something was missing: a world where anything was possible. This world would become Rifts, and in 1990, the project he had planned so carefully for years was finally



ready for print

Rifts is an epic role-playing game with a story set on a future Earth. In it. billions of human lives were lost in a nuclear holocaust, and the sudden surge of unleashed psychic energy caused the ley lines to surge with insuppressible power. Floods, earthquakes, and natural disasters all ensured more human deaths, feeding energy into the already pulsing ley lines. This unstonnable chain of events caused rifts, or tears in the very fabric of space and time. Players struggled to survive in a world full of multidimensional travel, supernatural beings, gods, demons, a vampire kingdom, time travel and time travelers, robots, cyborgs, automatic weapons, and even Martians. The game was a huge success, selling out 10,000 copies in three months.

So how suitable is the N-Gage for a game of such epic proportions? Backbone Entertainment and Nokia have teamed up to bring Rifts



N-Gage. When asked why Siembleda finally said yes to Nokia, Rifts producer Shane Neville replied, "There are a ton of fans who want to see the franchise carry through, and when your creative director and your producer are two of the biggest Rifts fans around, you know we are going to ensure that happens."

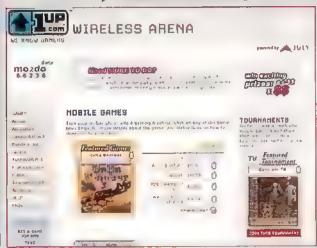
In a massive undertaking, the title will include over 80 hours of tactical gameplay, 11 playable classes, over 50 enemies and NPCs, and at least six locations, all pulled from the original title. Rifts: Promise of Power is a tactical-RPG featuring turn-based combat with a 3D camera that automatically zooms back, allowing the player to enact multiple attacks on a grid-based battleground. The combat itself is based on an attack-point system similar to the one in Final Fantasy Tactics.

Players will battle in familiar locations such as the New German Republic; the Coalition States, an antimagic coalition in North America; Lazlo, a modern-day Toronto; Scotland, full of spells and fairles; Old Bones, a black-market town in Quebec; and a futuristic China. The designers of the game are also bringing back the most popular character classes for this game: glitherboy, the Juicer, head hunter, mind melter, lay line walker, burster, cyber knight, battle magi, crazy, and mystic.

While the game is still in the design stages, Neville announced that multiplayer cooperative play will be available via Bluetonth functionality. And while the details are still under wraps, N-Gage Arena will be incorporated into the game, allowing for global connectivity, though online multiplay has not been officially announced.

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# ITS ALL AB THETOYS

# All the tech that's worth your cash

It's December, and that means one thing to us: getting our hands on some new toys. Fortunately for us, vendors like to oblige our selfish yearnings by sending us stuff-with the caveat that we'll write about our new acquisitions. This month we got our hands on some pretty juicy tidbits. Toshiba's latest media center notebook, the Qosmio, isn't the best gaming notebook in the world, but it's stiil pretty darn cool. Wil also got to beat on Nyidla's midrange card, the 6600 GT. And we have reviews of some nice gift options, such as Logitech's new laser mouse, the new Zboard keyboard, Logitech's kickass new surround-sound speakers, and Nyko's very latest Air Flo gamepad

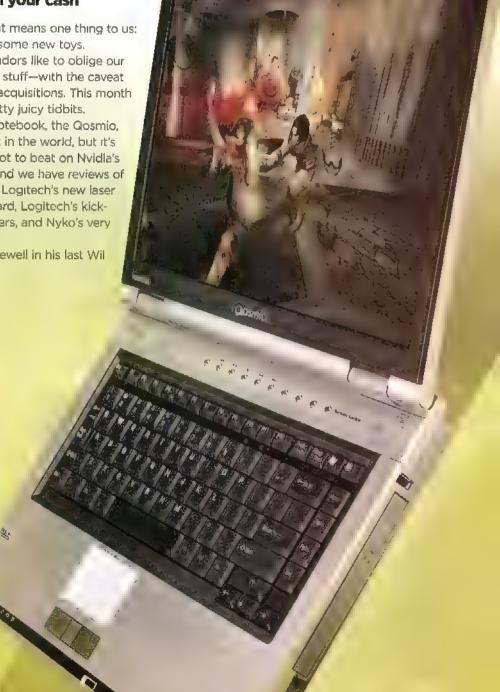
Oh yeah, and Wil bids you farewell in his last Wil Power column.











MANOHACTURER Toshiba MODEL Quamio 815-AVIDI PRICE \$2,699

# OSHIBA'S LATEST MOBILE LINE

An awesome multimedia machine that leaves gamers wanting more

If there's one adjective that accurately describes Toshiba's line of media center notebook PCs. it's "cool," it's hard not to be impressed by these machines: The 15-inch TruBrite display on the new Qosmio E15-AV101 is crisp and clear, the machine rocks a 75GB hard drive, It has built-in TV tuner capabilities, and those little Harman Kardon speakers keep getting better and better. With all of these accolades, why didn't this machine earn an Editors' Choice award? It's simple: graphics.

Nearly everything about the Gosmio E15-AVIOI is awesome, in add tion to the components mentioned above, the machine ships with what Toshiba calls a DVD SuperMulti drive, in other words, DVOs you burn on this machine will more than likely work in any DVD player Furthermore, the Qosmio line is designed so that you can play DVD movies, listen to CDs, or even watch prerecorded television without having to launch the Windows operating system. This means that you'll be able to

do these things more quickly (since you won't be booting into Windows) while also extending your battery life. In a nutshell, the Qosmio E15-AV101 is a multimedia dream come true. Gaming, however, is where this dream begins to fade.

### WE NEED MORE HORSEPOWER!

While the Gosmio E15 AV101 shines in "coolness," its lack of graphics muscle makes It a substandard gaming machine. The rig we tested shipped with a woefully underpowered 64MB Nyidia GeForce FX Go 5200 graphics card, and our benchmark numbers exposed this machine's Achiles heel. We tested the machine at 1024x768 with both AA and AF turned off, and the numbers were downright horrible 1,265 in 30Mark2003, 8fps in AquaMark 2003, and 45fps in the Unreal Tournament 2003 benchmark. We didn't even install Doom 3 on this machine

Of course, the Qosmio wasn't designed with gaming in mind. If you want a truly gaming-capable notebook PC, get a Dell Inspiron XPS or a Voodoo Envy What the Qosmio does wall is everything else. We love the built-in TV tuner card (the Toshiba Sate lite we reviewed in September has the TV tuner in a removable bay, which means you can't have the battery, DVD MultiDrive, and TV tuner in the machine at the same time)

While the Qosmio E15-AV101 shines in "coolness," its lack of graphics muscle makes it a substandard gaming machine.



@ Unlike in earlier Toshiba leptops, the DVD SuperMulti Drive, TV tuner, and battery can all coexist in the Qosmio-no more swapping!

and media center capabilities. We recorded a ton of the 2004 Summer Olympics and watched at our convenience. This media center application works like TiVo You download the guide for your particular cable or satellite situation and simply hit Record on the included remote control to save your favorite

All in all, Toshiba's Qosmio E15-AVIOL Is an awesome machine—if you don't want to play games on it. Research says that many PC gamers have multiple machines. While I know plenty of people who can afford only one machine, if you're one of the lucky few who have the necessary scrill to have a dedicated gaming machine and a killer notebook for everything else, then by all means, run out now and buy this thing. It's that awesome If, however, you want a notebook that can easily play something other than Age of Empires, you're better off with mobile solutions from Dell. Voodoo, or Alienware. M William O'Neal



# SY THE NUMBERS

# Manufacturer/Model

Operating System

Processor (CPU)

Graphica Processor

Optical Drive

3DMark2003 Pro v340

AquaMark 2003

Comanche 4

UT2003 Botmatc

### Teshiba Qosmio E15-AVIOI

Windows XP Media Center Edition

nte: 1.7GHz Pent um

512MB DDR

64MB Nvidia GeForce FX Go 5200

DVD SuperMulti drive

15-inch TruBrite display (1024x768)

Four USB 2.0 ports; Built-in TV tuner; LCD TV capabilities; 1394 FireWire port; Harman Kardon speakers, 5-Video in/out

1,265

8

27



# THE STEEL STEEL

ifter four years at GGW, I'm pleased to announce that I've been shown the door. That i'right, you jerks won't have william O'Neal to push around anymoneut seriously. It was run. That said. before ( set out for "greeney" pasture

before. I set out for "greener" pasture also known as a rival publisher just two blocks away from Ziff Davis. I've been asked to write one last column.

When I showed up in December of 2000, I had no idee what I was in for George Jones warned me on my first day, "Dude, get ready, You've gonna ge so much hate mail." Boy, was he right That said, he didn't mention all the positive feedback that I'd receive. I got tone of really fouching mail from solders stationed overseas. I also appreciated all the mail I got from other black guy, who thought they were the only black dudes in the world who liked to mess ground with computers, I appreciated around with computers, I appreciated being able to connect with other peo ple who worried they were all along

### WHAT ABOUT ALL THAT STUFF?

The best part about being CGW's tech inical editor (aside from that enormous nical editor (aside from that enormous paychack) was being one of the first people to see new technology. Being able to build machines with cutting-edge products that aren't available to the public is so much fun, and I'm sura I'm miss. A. Of course, on the file side, won't miss the 600-plus word e-mails that some of you would write complaining about my choices.

LAS far as CGW's Tech section is concerned, you can rest, assured.

concerned, you can rest assured while CGW is now "Wil-free," [17] continue to cover trends in geming hardware.

Before I set out for "greener" pastures aise known as a nya publisher just two blocks away from Ziff Davis, I've been asked to write one last column

8 VAIN FACT WIN Noble FR / 1 128MB GoForce 6600 GT PCI Express PR CE \$200

# NVIDIAS MIDRANGE

Nvidia's GeForce 6600 GT is fast enough, and it won't break the bank



For years, I've been fielding questions from readers asking me which components they should get to prepare their machines to run Doom 3 and

Half-Life 2. Until now, my answer has always been, "The best graphics card you can afford." What I really meant was, "Get whichever \$500 card is the current king of the hill." Nvidia's GeForce 6600 GT turns that logic on its head. We got our hands on one and put it through our suite of tests.

We tested the 6600 GT at 1280x1024 with 4x AA and 8x AF turned on, and we were seriously impressed. On our test machine, a Shuttle XPC SB81P box with an Intel 3.4GHz Pentium 4 EE and IGB of Kingston HyperX DDR 400 memory, we achieved some pretty good numbers. The 6600 GT's 3DMark2003 score of 2,559 at the above-mentioned resolution is incredible for a midrange card, but most impressive was its Doom 3 score of 26 frames per second at those settings. If you turn off AA and AF, this thing will scream at Doom 3. Which means, if all the other components are powerful enough, you'll be able to play the game without shelling out \$500-plus on a graphics card.

Of course, this brings us to the PCI Express issue. Nvidia will also offer an AGP version of the card, but unlike its PCI Express-based brother, it will require a power connector. The PCI Express version of the 6600 GT pulls power from the motherboard.

### TECHNOLOGICAL THROWBACK

Similar to its big brother, the 6800 GT, the 6600 GT has support for Nvidia's Scalable Link Interface (SLI) technology, which allows users to install two PCI express



cards into a system with a motherboard that has two PCI Express 16-lane slots. Old-school gamers will remember SLI from the 3dfx Voodoo days. You'll need an Intel Tumwator-based motherboard (which also supports dual Xeon processors) to do this, and they're not cheap. Which begs the question, if you can afford this kind of horsepower, what are you doing buying a midrange card anyway, Rockefeller?

Using the 6600 GT is like taking a lowbudget baseball team to the postseasonyou're getting a ton of bang for not much buck in addition to its performance results, the 6600 GT supports an awesome list of features, including support for Shader Model 3.0 and DDR3 memory with a 128-bit memory interface. The 6600 GT PCI Express version is a fantastic solution if you're putting together a PCI Express-based rig. That said, we have yet to see how the AGP version stacks up. William O'Neal

SCORE:

# HARDWARE HISTORY

the graphics-card scene is getting pretty hot these days: it reminds me of the time years ago when we made the jump from PCI to AGP praphics. Back then, the new but promised greater bandwidth and eventually, better gaming performance. With the introduction of PC express, we're at a similar point in echnology history. Years from now we'll all look back at the introduction of PCI Express similarly. The thing is, the success of Nyidia's seForce 6600 GT-and similar will undoubtedly be linked to the introduction of PCI Express







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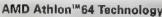
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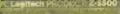


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Shappars Choles Award 2003 Dest Piece to Buy Components





Logitech ups the ante with its new speaker kit



one of the more "crunk-wor-thy" speaker kits when it came out late last year. (Translation: It had soul-shaking sound.) But

that system, as good at it was, still lacked that extra bit of bump. That's why Logitech went back to the drawing board and tried to further refine an already great THX-certified system. The result is its new flagship, the Z-5500. Your butt doesn't need to be numb from

Usually, an over sowered sub is

ffrown into a system to compensate for lackluster performance. That wasn't the case here, this system actual nas natural-sounding mics and

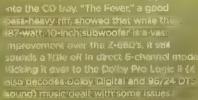
Lomtech + / J MX1000 Laser Moose

# EST. GREATE

Is any mouse really worth \$80?

According to Logitech, the MX1000 is 20 times more sensitive to surface detail than those red glowing LED optical mice. This is great if you use your mouse on polished wood-grain surfaces or a clear Lucite table without a mouse pad. I dragged the MX1000 across a variety of tricky surfaces and it never failed to respond. In games, it performed as sensitively as my optical mouse whether I was desperately fending off a pack of Doom 3 imps or lining up a precise sniper shot in Call of Duty: United Offensive.

The MX1000 is very comfortable, charges guickly, and holds that charge a long time. So what's the hitch? There's no way to adjust the speed of page-scrolling buttons -it moves so fast that Web pages threaten to burst into flames. More problematic is the wheel button-games seem not to read it, even in a game like City of Heroes where that button has a default function I like this mouse-quite a bit-but # didn't have to drop \$80 on it. If you're willing to spend that much and you're not going to miss using the wheel button in your games, this is the mouse for you. @ Robert Coffey



auco gecoges body tableal and so/24-01s sound) music dealt with some issues. The real reason you want this kit, though so immerse yourself in Call of Duty.

United Oriensial and Doom's, whether it was tracer fire whizzing by my left ear or hearing demons hiss at they prepare to ship me from behind, the 2-5500s reary throw cound at you from all sides. And their saying a lost, considering that Greative Laos released a powerfully good cand way over the top). This unround system

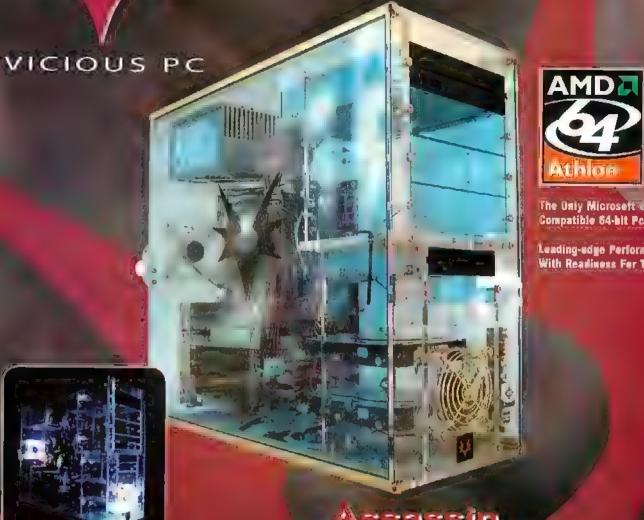
subwooler that you'll bang your shins on if you but it too close to your char. You'll also notice that there's been major cosmettic surgery so this kin doesn't look like a hunk of junk. The big change is the two-tone control band with a twic-line display that's legible from across the room. While it does have one conservant one opinical display input, we wish that there was room for a aw more inputs in back.

This kit ain't exactly cheep at \$400, but it does a great job and in perfect for those that want rock-solid 5.1 surround source without excessive bells and whistles

SCORE: \*\*\*



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The Uniy Microseft 🕲 Windows 🐯 Compatible 64-bit Pc Precessor

Leading-edge Performance Teday, With Readiness For The Future



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1024ME Dual-Channel PC3200 400MHz DDR RAM Memory Dual 120GB SATA 150 7200 RPM RAID Array Hard Drive 16X DVD/CD-RW Drive

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PRODUCT



Editors' Choice

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PC Air Flo EX

# WEATIT

For those who fear the keyboard and mouse—help is here

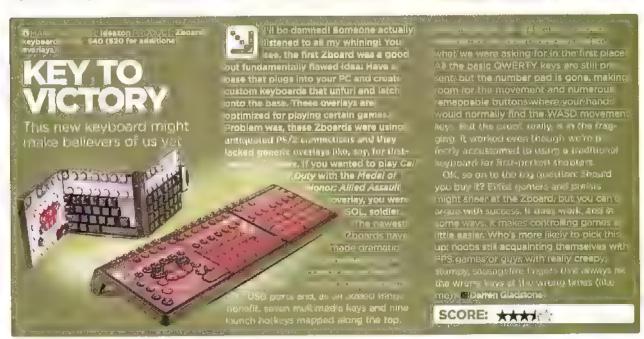
I never realized how many sweaty-palmed punks there are out there. Seriously, I'd grab a controller from someone and it'd have this layer of funk that just didn't feel right. Then came the original Air Flo. Granted, I was more impressed with having a PS2-like controller for PC games than with the cool summer breeze that this gamepad shot onto my hands, but hey, while this controller blow, it was in a good way.

It's pretty much the same story this time around with the EX. Here's a good, functional controller that's perfect for playing Madden. The real hook, though, is the driver utility that Nyko is throwing In for good measure. Basically, it lets you remap any keys on this thing so well that it tricks your PC into thinking that it's a mouse.

Call of Duty was actually manageable on this controller after mapping the basic keys to it. The O-pad mimicked the WASD

The real hook is the driver utility Nyko is throwing in.

keys white the analog sticks replaced the mouse it would have been better if we could map the movement keys to the left analog stick, but hey, it is Nyko's first attempt Problem is, the Air Flo isn't really for me. I still prefer a keyboard and mouse for precision fragging. But for console gamers hooked on Halo 2 and Kilizone, this offers a fairly smooth transition into PC gaming M Darren Gladstone



# Cracked Case

# Starting from square one

ichael called me the other day. i'm assuming that Michael is his real name. He didn't give me his last name. He'd somehow tracked down my phone number. He told me he was calling from Montana. Or maybe it was Wyoming, I don't recall, Michael had read a lot of my columns in this magazine, as well as a lot of the stuff on ExtremeTech, the Ziff Davis technology site I co-manage He also had one of my books and had read a lot of other information.

You see, Michael wanted to build a computer. He's grown tired of using his mother's PC and wanted to know where to start. I suggested gently that he should get started by buying a PC.

### IN THE BEGINNING...

No doubt, some youthful prodigy born clutching a screwdriver is reading this and chortling, "My first PC was a water-cooled." overclocked rig I built with stone knives and bearskins!

If you're one of those geniuses, stop reading right now and return to your logic analyzer Most of us, however, started down the DIY path by doing small things: adding more memory, upgrading a graphics card, or installing a new soundcard, in my case, it happened many years ago. Falcon 3.0 (yes, 3.0) had just come out 1 had a white-box PC ("white box" being the term for a generic PC bought from a local store) that used a 20MHz 386 processor The sim supported something called a "high-fidelity flight model," which supposedly used real fluid dynamics to calculate the flight model. But you needed a floating-point coprocessor. Back in those dark ages of the PC, the floating point unit was

Some prodigy born clutching a screwdriver is reading this and chortling, "My first PC was a water-cooled. overclocked rig I built with stone knives and bearskins!"



actually an external chip. So I bought an 80387 coprocessor and installed it in my 386. It was my first experience installing any type of chip, and it was nerve wracking But I got through it and was cruising the virtual skies in short order

Now, it's possible you may never want to build your own PC from scratch. Or if you've peen reading this section of CGW, plus other magazines and the odd websites (cough, www.extremetech.com, cough), then the itch to build it yourself may be growing more insistent. But if you've never cracked open a case, then starting with an ATX chassis and a pile of parts is probably not going to be the best approach.

Instead, buy a PC. That's right, buy it, don't build it. But don't just buy any PC While big manufacturers such as Dell and HP may build perfectly decent PCs, they often have structural quirks that make them poor candidates for future PC-building projects. Instead, buy a white-box system. It may not be the cheapest solution, but you end up with a system built in a

very standard way that's easy to upgrade. (i should note that a lot of the boutique gaming PCs are white-box systems In much fancier skins. A typical Falcon Northwest, VoadooPC, or Alienware system will be built up from components that adhere to normal industry standards. It's the really big boys that use funky power supplies or addball custom case designs who lock you out.)

You can start small that way. A new DirectX 9.0c game comes out, so you install a newer graphics card. That half-gigabyte of memory suddenly starts to seem small, so you swap it out for a full gigabyte (selling the old RAM on eBay in the process). Then that hot new RTS ships, and you find that your CPU performance is anemic. So you pop off the heat sink, clean off the thermal goo, and swap in a new processor Eventually, that PC you bought may have almost no original components in it.

Congratulations, You've built a PC and never even knew it. Now you're ready to start with a pile of parts. @ Loyd Case



# Check Out









# Inside

We were thinking of calling this section

Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself (as one of our favorite insane TV personalities would say), but "Check Out" just rolls off the tongue so much more easily. This month, we've prepared a *Doom* 3-intensive Check Out, with some great strategies and the first installment of an all-new recurring comic by senior goofball Darren Gladstone.

# Get your LAN party on!

It's hard not to like small formfactor machines-they're portable, easy to build (sort

of), and don't take up much space But if you've been following this frend, you know that their small power supplies and cramped insides limit both upgrade ability and the type of components you can use: for instance, many of the highend graphics cards by both ATI and Nvidia require so much juice that they simply won't work with many small form-factor boxes. Shuttle was the first company to gain prominence in this area, and its XPC SB8IP (dubbed the high-voltage" system) is robust enough. to handle fast CPUs. Thanks to the fact that it rocks a PCI Express motherboard, we were able to build a machine using Nvidia's midrange I28MB GeForce 6600GT graphics card.

Because the motherboard comes with the case, you don't have to worry about things like a front-pane power switch, USB ports, and FireWire connectors. That piece of good news aside, working within the confines of such a tiny box is a pain in the ass-which is something to bear in mind if you decide to go this route.

I decided to build this machine with the überexpensive Intel 3 4GHz Pentium 4 Extreme Edition processor, 1GB of Kingston HyperX DDR400 memory, and a Plextor DVD Multi-Drive. Since this setup is superfast. I finished off the whole sexy package with a ViewSonic 201-inch LCD and

ViewSonic VP201s 20.1-inch LCD monitor

Shuttle. XPC SB81P



Logitech's superloud 21 speakers

As you can see, this isn't exactly cheapthe Shuttle box alone will run you about \$300 (for the case, power supply, and motherboard). You can save a ton of cash by building one with 512M8 of memory, a smaller hard drive, a CRT monitor, and a less expensive CPU. @ William O'Neal

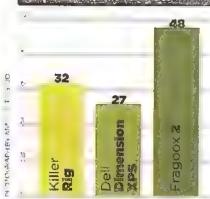
Working within the confines of such a tiny box is a pain in the ass-which is something to bear in mind if you decide to go this route.

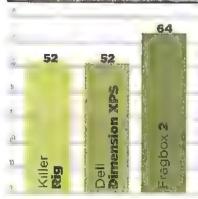
# 3DMark03 Pro 5899 4908 Del Dimension XPS 2559





# AquaMark 2003





# The Guts

MODEL	KILLER RIG	PRICE
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition	\$100
Motherboard/ Case	Shuttle XPC SBBIP	\$300
Processor (CPU)	Intel 3.4GHz Pentium 4 EE	\$1,000
Memory	IGB Kingston HyperX DDx400	\$200
Hard drive	120GB Maxtor Hard Drive	\$100
Graphics processor	128MB Nividia Geliorce 6600 GT	\$150
Optical drive	Plextor DVD Multi-Drive	\$150
Monitor	20.1-inch ViewSonic VP201s LCD	<b>SP00</b>
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard	525
Mouse	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer 3.0	\$25
Speakers	Logitech Z-2200	\$150
TOTAL COST	in the factor	53,100

# Our picks

The holiday season is almost here. Lots of good stuff has come out recently. including PCI Express graphics cards, blazingly fast processors, and hard drives with huge amounts of storage space. With all the resource-intensive games in the pipeline, this is a good thing-heck, there's an entire hardware guide dedicated to explaining how to play Doom 3 in all its maxed-out, graphically overpowered glory...and something tells us that's just the beginning. But with our monthly A-List recommendations in hand, you're guaranteed to be ready for anything that comes up.





Where would we be without computers? Not working at a magazine called Computer Gaming World, that's for sure. With our luck, we'd be stuck at Abacus Monthly or something.

# Desktop systems



### PRODUCT

### HIGH-END PICK

Generation 3 Dimension XPS \$3,699 (E-Value code 6V411-XPS3REKO Dell

BUDGET PICK

Back to School PC \$1,000 **Buypower** 

### WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT HE TWO -

Dell's PCI Express-based machine, the Generation 3 Dimension XPS, is an awesome system. With IGB of DDR2 memory, 500GB of storage space, 5.1 speakers, and a killer 20.1-inch LCD, you're getting plenty of good stuff here.

This rig ships with a powerful processor (3GHz Intel Pentium 4) and a weak graphics card (256MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5700LE), but since IBuyPower is a "build to order" outfit, you can easily tweak that configuration.



We recently saw some pretty crazy-looking in-game speakers in our demo of Playboy: The Mansion...and an extremely spry Hugh Hefner popping and locking.

# Speakers



### PRODUCT

# WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

### OUR PICK

Creative MegaWorks 21 250D \$150 Creative

Good speakers are a must-have. The thing is, you may not want to compromise quality in order to get a surroundsound setup. In any case, the MegaWorks 2.1 250Ds are great. They're THX certified, and the subwoofer kicks.



Nowadays, most videocards are so beefy that you actually have to plug them into your power supply. Soon, we'll need automobile-grade engines just to use Word.

# Videocard



HIGH-END PICK

PNY Verto 256MB Nyidia GeForce 6800 GT \$500 PNY

While Nvidia's GeForce 6600 GT card is good, the 6800 GT is even better if you can deal with the price tag. Of course, not everyone can just run out and plug it in; you need more power than NORAD →and a PCI Express x16-capable motherboard—to really take advantage of its abilities, it's worth noting that the 6800 GT outperforms the ATI Radeon X800 XT in Id's latest plockbuster, Doom 3.



MIDRANGE PICK

128MB Nvidia GeForce 6600 GT 5200 Nvidia

The midrange market is where companies make all the money. That's because not everyone is gonna run out and drop \$500 on an aftermarket graphics card. Nvidia's midrange PCI Express option, the GeForce 6600 GT, is even powerful enough to run Doom 3. Add to that the fact that it doesn't have the same power requirements as its big brother, the 6800 GT, and you've got a pretty good card here.

BUDGET PICK

128MB ATI Radeon 9600 XT \$150 ATI

The Radeon 9600 XT used to be ATI's midrange pick Of course, that was before everyone jumped on the PCI Express bandwagon. If you are still running an AGP system and are on a budget, then you can't go wrong with this card, it's fast enough for most games that are out right now, and it won't break the bank



We can't help but wonder if desktop computers will one day be totally phased out in favor of laptops. Then maybe we'll have a good excuse to expense some of these badass-looking portable rigs we keep seeing.

# Laptop



HIGH-END PICK

Deli inspiron XPS \$3,000 Dell

Dell's Inspiron XPS is the ultimate desktop replacement. Not only does it weigh more than 10 lbs., but it also rocks an intel 3.4GHz Pentium 4 processor and IGB of DDR memory. We recently had ours updated with ATr's 256MB Mobility Radeon 9800; we can even play Doom 3 at 1280x1024

MEDIA CENTER PICK

Toshiba Gosmlo E15-AV101 \$3,000 Toshiba

Toshiba's Gosmio Media Center laptop is the ultimate jackof-all-trades. Is it a TiVo? Yes, is it a DVD player? Yes, That said, this machine isn't necessarily designed with gaming in mind, as evidenced by that underpowered 64MB GeForce FX Go5200 graphics card. While it's not as fast as Dell's inspiron XPS, the Qosmlo is still pretty cool.

LIGHTWHIGHT PICK

200APC 52.225 Gateway

With its lightweight and built-in 80211b/g wireless capabilities. we're in love with Gateway's 200ARC, Add the built-in DVD multidrive into the mix and this baby is the ultimate road warrior

# Forward

Welcome to Fast Forward, CGW's monthly back-of-the-book hodgepodge of all things PC-gaming related. Every month, we'll offer up a handy reviews index, a few editors' picks, and whatever else we manage to think of

Having a tough time with those boss fights in Doom 37 We've got some killer strategies to help you out in a pinch By Bryan Stratton, courtesy of Prima Games



Vagary is the first of four bosses you'll face in Doom 3. Half humanoid and half spider. she is the gueen of the trites and delights in webbing tip living humans and hanging them in her lair for late-night snacks.



Enter the EFR Main Shipping Hub with your HE hand grenades equipped, if you have any left. Otherwise, use the plasma gun. When you enter the hub, a cut-scene plays, showing Vagary crawling out of her hole. When the cutscene ends, the battle is on!



Vagary's main method of offense is to telekinetically ifft the objects in her lair and hurl them at you. You absolutely must keep moving at altimes—sprinting if possible—to avoid them. Some adrenaline near the entrance to the EFR Main Shipping Hub can help.



Circle-strafe around her and toss HE hand grenades from a distance. When you run out of grenades (or if this attack method doesn't suit your play style), use fully automatic ranged weapons-preferably the plasma gun, with the chain gun as a backup. In a pinch, use the machine gun. You can find more clips near the area that Vagary crawled out of TIP find tilps near the area that Yagary crawled out of.



Vagary can also attack with her pincers and teeth, so using the shotgun is only recommended as a last resort. And no, you can't just run into the arriock to get away; it remains sealed until Vagary is dead IIII CAUTION Vapary hurls spiked boulders at you as well; be aware that they will hurt you even if you run into them while they're fust lying around her lair.



After you kill Vagary, take a moment to pat yourself on the back, and then open the airlock bay door. Touch the control panel inside the airlock to complete the level and proceed to the EnPro Plant.



### GUARDIAN

When the fight begins, you get a gampse of the Soulcube which has spinning blades surrounding it. The mammoth Guardian then rises up from the ground, and the fight commences.



First things first: Behind each of the four pillars are valuable pickups that will save your life They include:

- Pillar 1: Rockets
- · Pillar 2: Rockets
- Pillar 3: Large medk.t
- · Pillar 4: Rockets, ammo belt, grenades, BFG cell, and plasma cell



hardcore graphic adventure Junkle Sierra was the king of the hill back then and for my money, it doesn't get any better than the original Gabriel Knight

Knight: Sins of

used to be a



The Politica Machine This political simulator is oddly addictive, even to someone as polit-

ically ignorant as I am This game has simplistic, grace that not too many games possess anymore.



Yeah, so I hayen't been playing it much lately. Too much "work" get-

ting in the way. Lots of new updates and the looming City of Villains expansion will soon draw me back, though





The Guardian is bind, but it spawns Guardian Seekers, which float above the arena, scouring it with searchlights. If a Guardian Seeker notices you, the Guardian charges toward you and attacks with crushing force



To make the Guardian vulnerable, you'll need to kill all of its Seckers. This causes the Guardian to pause and spawn more Seekers from a blue light over its head. This light is the Guardian's weak point, but it is difficult to hit, as the Guardian sends out a barrage of firebal's once all of the Seekers are dead



f you don't have any BFG ammo left, use the rocket launcher to take down the Seekers, then shoot the Guardian when it's vulnerable. Hide behind the pillars. wait for the Seekers to come by, and blast them before they have a chance to notify the Guardian of your presence



Your only advantages are your speed and the cover that the four pillars provide. Remember that you can sprint constantly in Hell, so don't let up on the Sprint key until the battle is finished



### SABAOTH (AKA SERGEANT KELLY)

When you enter the CPU, Sarge rolls out of the northern door in his new guise as Sabaoth. That's right. His tower body is a tank and he's armed with a BFG-9000 There's no introduction; the fight begins immediately.

CAULION: Unfortunately, your Soulcube will not Idi) Sabaoth.



The most important thing to remember is to disrupt Sabaoth's BFG blasts by shooting at them with small-arms fire, such as your chain gun or machine gun. The second most important thing to remember is to stay away from Sabaoth-don't let him run you down or strike you with his clawlike appendage



As the fight progresses, the room changes. The floor panels around the perimeter drop out, revealing a lake of lava underneath. If you fall into it, you're a goner



The four pillars in the room also occasionally become electrified, if you're near them when they do, you'll be shocked for heavy damage

# Rewind

What should you play today? Names in red Indicate Editors' Choice games

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
Across the Dnepr	04/04	*Anthinit
Aura: Fate of the Ages	10/04	<del>केर्ना</del> व्यक्त
Battle Engine Aquila	04/04	<del>SAN</del> ET



1) Battlefield Viotnam	06/04	nimimimimim
Setleger	09/04	skalestesteste
Beyond Divinity	08/04	****
Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre	04/04	deletable.
Blade and Sword	04/04	<b>ylede</b> Lateste
Brood	07/04	2 - ONE
Catwoman	11/04	·
Chaos Legion	08/04	Att . Lee
City of Heroes	08/04	<del>Address</del>
Civilization III: Conquests	04/04	******



D Codenamo: Panzers	11/04	****
Combat Mission Afrika Korps	04/04	Ackabit
Conspiracles	05/04	<b>W</b> Admist
Crusader Kings	08/04	<b>नेनेन</b> स्था
Crystal Key 2: The Far Realm	08/04	** 1713
CSI: Crime Scene	08/04	Ank itriale

(2

# Rewind 100

GAME TO THE	"auzei" ""	RATING
Dead Man's Hand	08/04	**
Dead to Rights	04/04	##1
Desert Rats vs. Afrika Corps	07/04	stotot: >
Doom 3	10/04	****
Far Cry	06/04	****
Firefillation	06/04	<del>skal</del> n i franci
Gangland	06/04	<del>MAK</del> T T
Ground Control II: Operation Exodus	10/04	<del>lelelel</del> el



O Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	11/04	***
Hitman: Contracts	08/04	white
Horizons: Empire of Istaria	05/04	**
Jack the Alpper	05/04	**
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	09/04	****
Judge Dredd: Dredd Versus Death	0//04	***
Korea: Forgotten Confilct	04/04	**



Marin Committee of the last of	- 111	
© Kuma\War	09/04	<b>*</b> 7
Uneage II: The Chaotic Chronicle	08/04	**
Lords of the Realm III	07/04	*
Magic: The Gothering— Battlegrounds	04/04	नंत्रं
Manhunt	07/04	dalah
Missing: Since January	0/04	nicularitation
MVP Baseball 2004	06/04	***
Mysterious Journey II	03/04	***
NASCAR Thunder 2004	03/04	detaile -
Nemesis of the Roman Empire	07/04	oledeste en
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	04/04	******



You'll find some helpful pickups in the arena: There are armor shards and some security armor in the west a cove, and both large and small mook to in the east alcove. Look behind the southwest pillar for a large medkit and some adrenaline and behind the northwest pillar for a plasma cell and security armor. The northeast pillar has a small medkit near it, and the southeast pillar has a plasma cell



Keep using your chain gun or machine gun to knock out the BFG blasts, and use the rocket launcher to damage Sabaoth If you keep at it, you'll have him on the ropes in no time. If you're not comfortable switching weapons this quickly or if this particular strategy isn't working for you stick with the chain gun and papper Sabaoth with it when you're not shooting down his charges.



### DVBERDEMON

Welcome to the Hellgate It's all come down to this, the final, hair-raising battle with the Cyberdemon

😘 IIP: The Heligale is a manifestation of Kell on Mars. Your stamina is unlimited here, just as it was in Hell.

The Cyberdemon has two main methods of attack From a distance, it fires volleys from the rocket fauncher grafted to its right arm. Although the rockets are not guided like the revenant's are, they pack a tremendous punch

The Cyberdemon's second attack is a doozy: It jumps and lands on you with both feet. Suffice to say, there are better ways to spend your day than getting crushed by a three-story demon. Keep your distance



Watch out for the imps and maggots that crawl out of the Heligate in the arena's center if you stand still they'll quickly overwhelm you while the much slower Cyberdemon plods over to stomp you into pulp.

(AUT ON: There's another fairly obvious hazard in the arena: Be careful not to fall off of the edge and into the lava below. Boing so means instant death.



The Cyberdemon is completely invincible to all of your conventional attacks, including the BFG-9000. The only thing that hurts it is the Saulcube. You must hit the Cyberdemon with the Soulcube six times to defeat it.



You should circle-strafe around the Heligate, staying across the arena—away from the Cyberdemon-at all times. Kill maggots and imps with powerful weapons such as the rocket launcher to rack up souls for the Soulcube. As soon as it's ready, launch it at the Cyberdemon. ( Caution: Make sure no maggots or imps are between you and the Cyberdemon when you throw the Soutcube or you may inadvertently

hil the losser enemies instead. If you're constantly sprinting and circlestrafing, you might be able to finish this fight without suffering a point of damage. If your foes get a few lucky shots in, however, use the medkit and security armor near the arena entrance, as well as the security armor behind a pillar on the northern side 🚨



Darren "Funnyman" Gladstone makes with the ha ha











# Rewind?

Painkiller 07/04 \*\*\*\*

		-
□ Perimeter	09/04	Add
Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	06/04	***
Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots	07/04	white
Sacred	07/04	****
Shadowbang; Rise of Chaps	04/04	<del>dolo</del> le
Shrek 2	09/04	Antonio
Silent Storm	04/04	tekeki
Singles: Filet Up You	r Life   09/04	*



© Soldiers: Heroes of WWII 11/04 \*\*\* Soldner: Secret Wars 10/04 MINA.



		-
© Spider-Man 2	1/04	##
Splinter Cell Panders Temorrow	06/04	***/
Star Chamber	05/04	<del>Addd</del>
Syberia ()	05/04	kkki**
Tounage Mutant Ninja Turties	05/04	Advisor!
Terminator 3: War of the Machines	04/04	# North
The Political Machine	11/04	****

# Rewind 100



O The Sims 2	1/04	rice/elektric
The Suffering	10/04	***
Thief: Deadly Shadows	09/04	statetes c
Title Bout Championship Boxing	05/04	Halekala):
TrackManla	10/04	表面的言語
Trainz 2004	04/04	rijnirsini s
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	09/04	水水合作作
Universal Combat	10/04	skriktika (
Unreal Tournament 2004	06/04	****
Vegas Tycoon	94/04	****
Virtual Skippor 2	10/04	***



O War in the Pacific	11/04	表表表示 2
War Times	OB/04	nknkum mir
Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	07/04	Adr. 1
Wariords Battlecry III	08/04	र्गालांट गंदर्ग (१) ५
Wars & Warriors:	05/04	<del>delet</del> e ele





World Soccer Winning Eleven 7 International	10/04	kkkkk
Worms 3D	05/04	****
V-Dinna 740	PARWER	***

05/04

Our favorite things at 1UP.com

Hey guys! Check out our ever-expanding gaming community at 1UP.com, where you can create a journal, track your game collection, build a network of friends, and chat with other CGW readers. You can even join our club at cgwfans.1UP.com/club and let us know which clubs, blogs, and goofy pictures you'd like to see on this page each month.



## Somewhee http://servantes.lup.com/

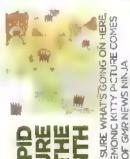
Serventes CGW forein stalwart and hardcore City of Herges addict, is pretty passignate about his PC games. Fie's even used his JUP blog to assumbly a learnably discourse on the art of online w infare Crazyl

# CLUB OF THE MONTH

Can't Stop Club http://cantstopstop-club.lUP.com/

Have you ever been glued to a game for so many hours that you just couldn't stop playing? Ever lose a Job or a girlfriend thanks to a game? Those people understand.





THIS DEMONIC KITTY FIRESY OF GMR NEWS COURTESY "CGW is the best magazine out. EVER!! I'm serious."

-URGH. .RIP!!!





You Don't Know Jack-

The Lost Gold

CGW's readers speak up

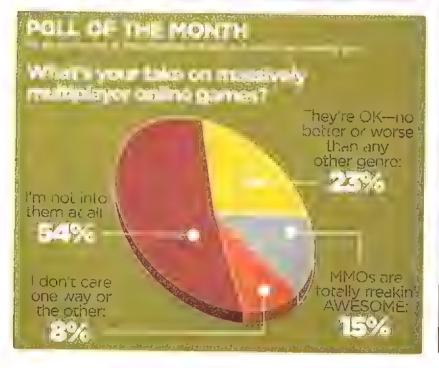
Think you're clever? Got some good game suggestions? Just want to share your two cents? Give us a holler and you just might show up in the pages of a future Sound Off.



# CAPTION CONTEST

Do our captions suck? Think you can come up with something wither? E-mail your caption for this Swns 2 screenshot, along with your name and address, to cowlette ... rilldavis com with the subject "Caption Contest" and you just might win a brandnew copy of the game for yourself.









ruce, 0:00: Tom is playing as the gauri, I don't even know what that is. I'm the undead, which should be obvious to anyone who has seen a George Romero film Tom actually suggested I play as the undead because they can heal anywhere (due to realism). and this might make me not lose quite as badly But I'm not just the undead. I'm the Cevah faction of the undead. Their platform, apparently, is faster speed and entrenchment, OK, I'll vote for that

Tom, 7:30: I started in the village of Thorfin at the southern end of the map. In the bottom corner, I settle Hjord and conquer a drauga village named Vor Sark, which would let me waste my resources on halfdog/half-monkey units if I wanted But my



Tom "liberates" a city of half dog/half



Adelion pummels the giant purple robot. Surprisingly, this isn't a euphemism for anything.

biggest find was an artifact shrine. It took three attempts to beat the Mana Construct guardian, which was pretty embarrassing, considering the thing is just a glant purple robot. But once I captured the shrine, I was elated to discover Leila's Staff, which adds +15 percent to my units' health.

Bruce, 7:50: Kohan II actually has little construction units that build structures for you, unlike the other Kohan games, which were too abstract and intellectual to actually have physical representations of industrial concerns. The problem is that while I know that metal probably builds knights. don't know what builds skeletons.

Tom, 15:29: I have a fireball-flinging hero



Maybe this is a job for the Orkin Man.

named Adellon leading a pack of trackers They attack a lair of blackfang spiders. which trap them in webs and then poison them to death. The only thing more embarrassing that can happen in a fantasy world is to be kined by rats, which are for tunately not present here if there were rats, they'd be called something different, much like elves are called haroun, dwarves are called gaum, and heroes are called kohans. Maybe rats would be sarkinnens or rosthards. Perhaps dingushuffers

Bruce, 16:15: In case you were wondering. it turns out bonesmiths build skeletons. That is the picture of the anvil If you see an anvil, do you think, "That's a big hunk of metal for making skeletons?" I don't.



EBruce
L. of month

Bruce denounced Tom
as a Communist and a
threat to national
security.

And as a result, I build the thing that makes ghouls. Ghouls are apparently made out of wood, for some reason that probably has to do with the last Ceyan elections. I have no idea what is going on, except that if I don't expand as fast as I can, Tom will own haif the map before I have built my second city.

Tom, 18:47: While heading back with the newly risen Adellon to give those spiders what-for, I run afoul of one of Bruce's cities, It's called Dark Crossing, and it sits west of Thorfin, just north of my little cluster of sites at the bottom of the map. How did he establish himself down here so quickly? The Dark Crossing militia tangles with my trackers, who are sent into a series of unfortunate retreats. Adellon dies his second death

It's time to hit Bruce as hard as I can, because he crumbles under aggressive tactics. Actually, Bruce also crumbles if I just turtie. In fact, I suspect Bruce would crumble if I were to just quit out and go play Doom 3. But that wouldn't be very interesting, so I decide to go with the aggressive tactics thing

Bruce, 24:03: Judging from the size of the map and the number of cities I have, I suspect Tom and I are about even Consequently, right on due. Tom shows up with a big army and attacks my city of Dark Crossing. I assume this is the beginning of the end for me

Tom, 23:30: My four companies, led by my lour kohans, march on Dark Crossing from the south, striking at the soft underbelly of Bruce's empire. When Bruce's nightmares and skeletons arrive from the north, I handly shatter his brittle undead soldiers. After two minutes, Dark Crossing is mine. Not that I really want an undead city any more than I want that half-dog/half-monkey city, but at least Bruce doesn't get to use it

Bruce, 26:29: Dark Crossing falls, but thanks to my undead healing anywhere and my other undead coming as reinforcements, Tom is going to have this city for all of about two minutes. And that's exactly what happens.

Tom 27:00: Bruce's counterattack includes companies with liches that slow my guys



O Bruce counterattacks at Dark Crossing.

down and prophets that heal his guys. Both of them also sling magic attacks in battle. My troops haven't had time to fully recover. Thorfin quickly recruits three anvil companies to reinforce the battle, but by the time they arrive, my armies are broken and fleeing south to Hjord. Adellon the Oft-Killed has died a third time.



G With Dark Crossing rotaken, the undead chase the, um...gauri.

Bruce, 31:30: I'm actually in pretty good shape after that counterattack, so decide to press my advantage and attack a town that Tom has inexplicably named Thorfin

Tom, 31:41: How did he find my main city? I'm not ready for him. Thorfin's only defenses are my depleted anvits, while my experienced companies led by kohans are still recovering in Hjord. So in a desperate gamble, I rush them north to hit Dark Crossing while It's rebuilding. Maybe this will draw some of his forces of

Tom, 33:40: I've taken Dark Crossing, but Bruce is still showing no sign of easing up at Thorfin, where he's knocking down the walls with four companies of nightmares and some skeletons. Two of my three anvil companies have fled, so I quickly march my forces from Dark Crossing toward. Thorfin, They're advancing along the same path Bruce took and are poised to hit him from behind. When I strike, I'll hit the spellcasters first, since they position themselves behind the fighting.



A Thorfin under attack, take one.

Tom, 34:35: Just as Bruce has rolled over the last of Thorfin's defenders, my two anvil companies drop out of column formation and line up to attack. They advance into the fray, killing his liches and prophets. Now Bruce's army is pinned in the confines of the breached wall while my reinforcements hack away at him.

Bruce, 36:09: I manage to hold off Tom's counterattack, but I don't think I can hold this city for long. Consequently, when Tom shows up a couple minutes later with a bunch of gauris or whatever, I figure I should let him have his city back.



Bruce leaves Thorfin looted and burning, although eventually back in Tom's hands.

Tom, 37:10: Unfortunately, the forces that weren't holding me back at the breach were hacking away at Thorfin's city center frey take it at the last moment, the gates open, and his armies run away Damn. At least he's fled my capital, so I quickly recapture the city. Thorfin is mine again, and i've taken Dark Crossing. But Bruce's kohans have escaped with all their experience, and I have yet to explore most of the map. My first order of business is to build reliquaries so I can add healers to my armies.

Tom, 39:38: Without so much as taking a breather to bury his dead-oh wait, he probably presses them into service instead of burying them-Bruce descends on Dark Crossing Trush out of Thorfin to defend it, but he intercepts me with two ghoul companies and some nightmares. He's running circles around me and thinning out my reinforcements, which are easily beaten back, I guess that's what I get for relying on slow infantry. Meanwhile, he has a kohan named Hasanko who's reached the highest level Hasanko is summoning enormous bone golems that are particularly adept at smashing bulldings

Bruce, 40:47: Now that Dark Crossing in mine again, we're going to replay this one more time. Tom retreats to whatever fruity-named city he lives in, and I attack it. I think if I can take Thorlin from him and hold it, this game is mine. I bring down another nightmare company to attack his reinforcements as they arrive. This is called strategy, and I invented it.

Tom, 43:05: My new anvil companies and healers are destroyed as Bruce starts shredding Thorfin again. But then he stops, presumably to heal up his troops. Since he's not attacking, Thorfin technically isn't under siege, so my men also start healing. Furthermore, this gives me a chance to bring in reinforcements from D





(2) Thorfin under attack, take two.

D Hjord, as well as some beastriders, who are mounted on skull-headed horses from Von Sark, the drauga city, I take back any disparaging remarks I made earlier about the drauga.

Bruce, 44:31: I've built my fifth city. At some point, I need to turn my advantage in territory into a military advantage Right now I'm managing so much combat that I can't even get basic structures built. I wish I had asked to play this game slower, had a few more cups of coffee to keep up with the pace, or just whined about it or something, But I didn't.



@ One of Bruce's fatal mistakes: pausing to rest before laying slege to Thorfin.

Tom, 44:48: Bruce is moving in again, but this gives me time to assemble all my units at once. While some anvils hold the breach, my beastriders head off a company of nightmares trying to flank me. This ties up his forces while my anvils arrive from Hjord. It helps that I've got enough gold to equip my infantry with Whitesteel weapons and armor, as well as Khaldunite weapons for additional damage. Before long, I've shattered his army, killed two of his kohans, and sent the survivors (including Hasanko) fleeing north. The second siege of Thorfin has been broken-and this time, it didn't fall.

Bruce, 47:36: As usual, just as I think I am about to clinch the game, Tom does something to wriggle out of it. This time, I'm not sure what it was—either better strategy, more units, or cheating. One thing I've noticed is that unlike in previous Kohan games, your heroes matter a lot, ( should either have read the backstory or one of those WarCraft novels, because



@ Bruce's elite companies held sway early, but as they and their commanders died, they went back to zero experience. And that's not good.

once your kohans die, they lose all their experience, it's not realistic at all, but I d.dn't invent the game



O Tom tries yet again to retake Dark Crossing.

Tom, 49:15: Now that Bruce has been declawed, I send a lone anvil company to probe Dark Crossing. Just as I suspected, it's undefended-so I start knocking at the gates. But Hasanko and friends arrive shortly and drive me away, pursuing my anvils south toward Hjord. This gives me the perfect opportunity to swing my forces west out of Thorfin, then south from Dark Crossing to box him in, I have to try to kill his kohan lords.



A Hasanko and his bone golem. This also isn't a euphemism for anything.

Bruce, 50:40: Tom has another town south of Thorfin that he calls Hjord, because I seriously think he was running out of names. I need to capture and hold one more of Tom's cities. This one probably isn't going to be it, though, because suddenly Tom starts attacking me

Tom, 51:34: Five companies of heavily armed anvils fall onto Bruce's kohan lords. My drauga beastriders are hanging back, ready to intercept anyone who routes. First, a toxic-mist-spraying kohan named

Belphegor is killed, along with his company of nightmares. Then Hasanko's skeletons fall away and he runs north, right into Dark Crossing where Bruce has two companies of nightmares waiting. The beastriders are in hot pursuit, and the anvils are bringing up the rear, it takes a while, and there's some tense back-andforth (during which Adellon dies yet again), I take Dark Crossing right around the one hour mark. Unfortunately, Hasanko escapes again. I can't wait to kill that guy.

Bruce, 1:04:58: We've been playing this game for an hour? Now Tom is attacking another one of my cities, which pisses me off, Fortunately, I drive him away, so that calms me down, if Tom hadn't captured Dark Crossing again I'd have something like eight cities now. Instead, I have however many I would have had minus one. I'm reduced to making threatening comments into the microphone

Tom, 1:05:31: Using my surplus wood, I recruit a pack of snarling maulers. They are accompanied by huntmasters, who summon even more maulers in battle. I think Bruce has Alt-Tabbed out to go play Doom 3 or something, because I'm rolling through the first couple of cities with only minimal resistance. My most gratifying moment is when my roving packs of maulers surprise Hasanko and his skeleton company. The snarling beasts swarm him and finally manage to kill Bruce's last kohan lord.

Bruce, 1:10:50: Once he sets out from Dark Crossing, Tom is completely destroying me im not sure what's going on, but the game has totally changed. I used to be able to win head-to-head battles against him, but because TimeGate Studios decided to base this game on fantasy roleplaying instead of military strategy, it turns out I can't win without leveling up my characters. If I wanted to do that, I'd play that werewolf game

Tom, 1:20:12: Once Bruce is down to only two cities, we come to a negotiated settlement. His loss of cities coupled with his large armies have drop-kicked him into an economic death spiral. With no hope of recovery and no hope of standing up to my marauding drauga and gaurl, he surrenders. I'm well on my way to being the Ken Jennings of Tom vs. Bruce, ■



O The game ends with Bruce's cities being visited by a glant steamvaller called Tom's army.

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# Scorched Earth

# Tied to the Whipping Post

And so...the inevitable nattering nabob backlash

ou know who I hate? Each and every one of you. OK, that might be a bit, um, extreme, even for me. Still, there are times when I just want to grab a great big dead fish and start slapping gamers upside the head with it. And those times generally start right around the time the 133ter-than-thou game punditry starts going off about not really caring for the latest big game and instead preferring a Flash-based game they found on a Montenegro website. What is it about gamers-about people-that the second something starts getting some attention, be it The Sims, Doom 3, or Joe Stalin, they have to go and knock it off its pedestal?

Here at the Ziff Davis asbestos mill. there was actually an e-mail thread regarding Doom 3 in which one guy wrote, "Waitaminit, I'm sick of the 'it's fun' cop-out from game pundits." Are you now, Mr. Superbrain? OK, aside from 1) the fact that this fella had done his fair share of game punditry and 2) his pathetic attempt at bourbon-soaked Norman Mailer tough-guy-ism by using "waitaminit" (almost as pathetic as saying "fella"), Isn't fun more or less the point? Gaming's a leisure activity, right? So isn't "fun" not even a cop-out, but pretty much the complete and entire point?

Of course it is. But somewhere it became fashionable to jump aboard your high horse and start pounding the biggest game of the moment to paste under the hooves. I'm no fanboy id apologist (in fact, I'm fairly certain there are urinal cakes stamped with my face in their offices), but what's not to like about Doom 3? I understand if it's a matter of taste, if you're the sort of gamer who prefers RPGs to BFGs, but if you like shooters, why dismiss a game because it fails to sustain your suspension of disbelief simply because it has monsters popping out of closets? My friends, if the basis of your argument is that monsters in closets are just too unrealistic, I suggest that you are sorely in need both of a new argument and something at least approaching a life. And possibly some antipsychotic medication.

Here's a little term I learned at my leotard-wearing playacting college: the willing suspension of disbelief. The whole point of the term is in that one word "willing." You've got to sign on to this coalition of the willing in order to get anything out of it, because without agreeing to enter into that little pact with the game, you're



# There are times I want to grab a big dead fish and start slapping gamers with it.

guaranteeing you'll get nothing out of it. Are the object-manipulation physics not realistic enough for you? Here's a news flash for you, Brainiac-the rest of us had that little chunk of Eurekal the second we used a mouse to move around a little hand in a 2D world representing a 3D space, we just decided to go with it and have fun instead of investing in our master's degree in Salf-Perceived Genius. Is the game too much like some other shooter? Remind me again how dramatically different from each other every Mylar-sheathed comic book under your bed is. Uh-huh, that's what I thought. Nice Firefly T-shirt, by the way.

Right about now, there should be a nice little tidal wave of The Sims 2 hate spewing from hardcore gamers. I've already seen it on the IUP.com message boards and other sites, and the game hadn't even reached store shelves. What's the dominant argument against the franchise? The big sale numbers. How on earth can The Sims do so well while Flying Heroes languishes in bargain bins, goes the lament.

Maybe because it is a great game. Hey, lots of great stuff-like my Interpretative dance celebrating trepanning-gets overlooked, but many, like The Sims, don't. Now, never let it be said I'm against hate, and certainly never let it be said that I'm against hating the popular kid (I think three restraining orders speaks quite eloquently to that point), but at least hate the popular kid on his ass-kissing merits and not just because he's popular. Yeah, Danny Toback, I called you an ass kisser (and 100 yards isn't quite as far as your attorney is leading you to believe, either).

C'mon, the whole notion of "gamer street cred" is just sad beyond words. You might think that in the great worldwide gaming family, you're the cool, smart uncle who really opens the window of life to us. Sorry, no—instead, you're the humorless second cousin who invited himself over on Christmas Eve and then pointed out that the kids didn't distribute the tinsel evenly on the tree, Congratulations on totally missing the point. Robert Coffey robert\_coffey@ziffdavis.com family, you're the cool, smart uncle who

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# Scrapland Airlines

WHEN visiting Scrapland you'll probably want to take a moment to acquaint yourself with the local customs and rules. It could save your life. Many visitors don't realize Scrapland can be a dangerous world filled with crime, high stakes gambling, gunship racing and deadly combat. Life is short for those who ignore the rules. Survive by following these simple directions:

- I. Live the story. Murder mysteries don't come more epic than this. Find your place in the narrative and play your part. Without you Scrapland will be doomed.
- 2. Place your bets. Paid work is always easy come, easy go. When money is tight make a few extra bucks racing your fastest ships against Scrapland's craziest space pilots or challenging mercenaries to deathmatch arena combats.
- 3. Trick out your ride. Spare parts for weapons, engines, hulls, and upgrades can be found or purchased. A visit to Rusty's Garage will allow you to upgrade your favorite ride and build new ships.
- 4. Avoid the cops. Crooked cops aren't unique to your world, but lawyers are. So if you screw up on Scrapland you go straight to jail. Bribbery goes a long way, but a fast ship will save you the trouble.
- 5. Be yourself. While you could inhabit the body of anyone you meet and use their unique abilities to overcome obstacles, you won't, because it's illegal and you're not that kind of tourist... are you?



